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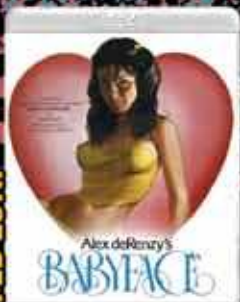


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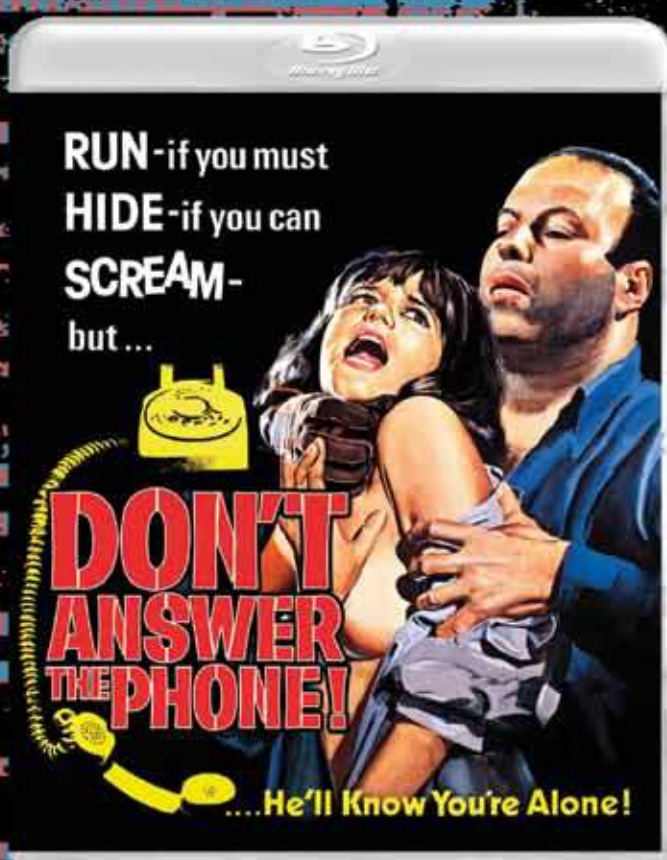
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Publisher/Editor

The Phantom of the Movies®

Official Phantom Biographer

Joe Kane

Circulation/Advertising

Nancy Naglin

Contributing Writers

David Annandale, Dan Cziraky, Terry & Tiffany DuFoe, Ronald C. Epstein, Tim Ferrante, Rob Freese, Chris Hallock, Joe Kane, Nancy Naglin, David-Elijah Nahmod, Joseph Perry, John Seal, Don Vaughan, Scott Voisin, Chris Weatherspoon

Digital/Social Media Coordinator/Design Consultant/

Cover Design

Kevin Hein

Tech Coordinator Tom Barnes

Spiritual Advisor

Guidance Ro-Man



Winter Chills Collector's Edition!

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Dedicated to the Memory and Living Legacy of John Zacherle

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THE ASTRO-ZOMBIES

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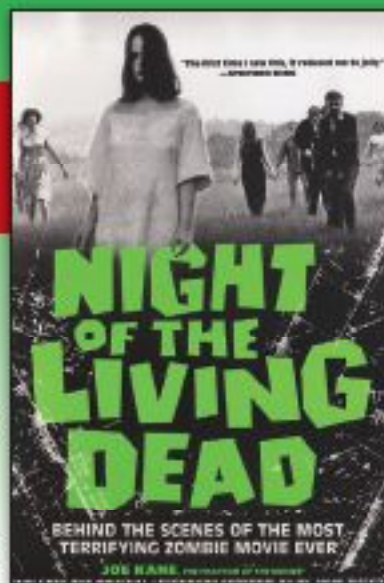
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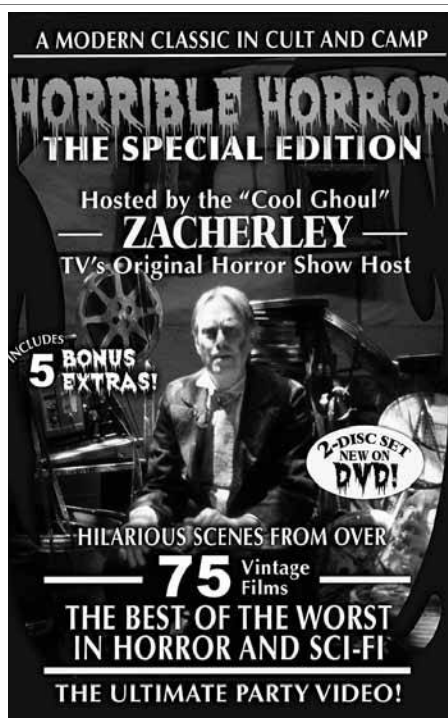
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The Phantom Speaks!

CHILLY SCREAMS OF WINTER: Our dynamic dad and daughter duo, of Terry & Tiffany DuFoe kick off our VS #101 Winter Chills edition with an in-depth chat with actor Dennis Christopher, star of two very different cult films, the inspirational coming-of-age story **Breaking Away** (1979) and the violent coming-of-rage tale **Fade to Black** (1980). Genre journalist Chris Hallock quizzes veteran Italo auteur Luigi (**Starcrash**) Cozzi re his new surreal epic **Blood on Melies' Moon**, and Don Vaughn talks with Vinegar Syndrome honchos Ryan Emerson and Brandon Upson about their tireless mission to protect and preserve endangered exploitation fare, from fright films like **Don't Answer the Phone** to adult films (**Sex World**), offbeat actioners (**Raw Force**) and genre oddities of every stripe. Our Southeast Asian correspondent Joseph Perry reports from a pair of far-flung genre fests, the 2016 Busan (Korea) International Film Festival and the Scream Queen Filmfest Tokyo, while Rob Freese survives Nashville's Belcourt Theater's 12 Hours of Terror. *Kaiju* maven Dan Cziraky critiques the Big G's fresh showcase, **Shin-Godzilla**, while Rob Freese and yours truly survey some of the latest vintage scare-screen movies to surface on disc. Elsewhere in this ish, Scott Voisin chats with busy character king Robert Costanzo and honors late, great thesp Jon Polito; Scott and Tim Ferrante try the case of **12 Angry Men** vs. **Primal Fear**; and our ever-opinionated crew of columnists and crix weigh in with their filmic findings.

OBIT ORBIT: Rarely has the Reaper swung his scythe with such relentless fury as he has since we last convened, claiming among his many victims three genre icons. In his role as horror host Zacherley, John Zacherle, 98, entertained generations of monster kids and casual fans alike with his darkly witty antics, which, in addition to TV hosting chores, encompassed macabre recordings ("Dinner with Drac"), film cameos (**Frankenhooker**), and copious live appearances. Ever-colorful maverick auteur Ted V. Mikels, 87, to whose memory we dedicate our current cover, dabbled in a broad variety of genres, creating such offbeat items as his signature effort **The Astro-Zombies** (and sequels), along with **The Black Klansman**, **The Corpse Grinders**, **10 Violent Women**, **Girl in Gold Boots** and dozens more. Herschell Gordon (H.G.) Lewis proved a one-man exploitation assembly line, churning out, for a fertile period in partnership with David F. Friedman, over 30 films from 1961 to 1972, ranging from gore movies (including the pioneering **Blood Feast** and **2000 Maniacs!**) to nudie-cuties,



biker flicks and even political satires (his **Year of the Yahoo!** sounds especially prescient at our present point in time). Withal, an idiosyncratic troika whose likes are not likely to be seen again.

The acting ranks were thinned by the loss of Alexis Arquette, 47, Patricia (**Kitten with a Whip**) Barry, 93, Don (**Return of the Living Dead**) Calfa, 76, Billy (**Night of the Hunter**) Chapin, 72, Paul (**It's a Small World**) Dale, 93, Lisa (**Night of Evil**) Gaye, 81, Florence (**Shakes the Clown**) Henderson, 82, Kevin Meaney, 60, Andrew (**Fawlty Towers**) Sachs, 86, Ann (**Journey to the 7th Planet**) Smyrner, 81, Lupita (**Spanish Dracula**) Tovar, 106 (!), Robert (**The Man from U.N.C.L.E.**) Vaughn, 83, Van (**The Green Hornet**) Williams, 82, and Fritz (**Creepshow**) Weaver, 90, among way too many others. The music world bid farewell to Leonard Cohen, 82, Greg Lake, 69, Leon Russell, 74, and Bobby Vee, 73, while director Curtis (**L.A. Confidential**) Hanson, 71, and filmmaker Thomas C. Rainone (a too-young 54) also departed. Fortunately for us, their readily accessible work lives on.

PHLATSCREEN PHLASHES: Among the titles we caught during the run-up to press time, we recommend the excellent documentary **De Palma** (Lionsgate), wherein the eponymous auteur hosts a brilliant tour of his tricky oeuvre; Elia Kazan's 1950 verite-styled New Orleans-set plague thriller **Panic in the Streets** (20th Century Fox), highlighted by a snarling



Jack Palance, who also shares scene-stealing honors with Joan Crawford in David Miller's top-tier suspenser **Sudden Fear**, out in a restored Blu-ray edition from Cohen Media, and Palance once again, hamming it up in the 1979 cosmic camp item **The Shape of Things to Come** (Blue Underground); Joseph Lerner's grittily offbeat 1949 NYC noir **C-Man** (Alpha Video), with Dean Jagger as an unlikely leading man and John Carradine in a great bit as a shady sawbones; the all-star 1975 shocker **Psychic Killer**, with Jim Hutton, Julie Adams and Paul Burke, in a strikingly restored, extras-packed Blu-ray via Vinegar Syndrome; Nicholas Meyer's 1979 time-travel classic **Time After Time** (Warner Archive Blu-ray), with David Warner as Jack the Ripper and Malcolm McDowell as H.G. Wells; Richard E. Cunha's 1958 cheesefest **She Demons** (Image Entertainment), notable for Rudolph Anders' unusually nuanced raving mad Nazi scientist perf (we also recently revisited Lionel Atwill's similarly spirited demented doc in **Man Made Monster** [Universal]); and **The Search for Weng Weng** (Wild Eye Releasing), David Leavold's fascinating 2007 inquiry into the history and fate of both the eponymous midget star of the nutty James Bond knock-off **For Your Height Only** and the 1970s-'80s Filipino genre-film industry that created him. Winners all.

BY GEORGE!: Speaking of winners, kudos to George Romero and crew for the **Night of the Living Dead** restoration recently on view, via a gala November 5 screening event, at NYC's Museum of Modern Art. An entry in MoMA's To Save and Project festival, the film was restored by The Museum of Modern Art and The Film Foundation from the original camera negative. Romero was on hand to introduce the film, just as he had back in the day when critics were first recognizing the movie's merits. **Night**, always relevant, artfully employed a horror-movie mirror to reflect the turmoil of 1960s USA. As for our current self-cannibalizing "Divided States of America" (per **Time** magazine) and generally fractured planet, we leave you with Zacherley's immortal words: "One day we'll all be dead. Then we'll finally have something in common."

Before we go, we'd also like to thank all the generous phans and phriends who conveyed their congrats and well wishes re our 100th issue milestone. We'll have to do it again sometime. In the meantime, till next time, don't forget to...

Keep watching the screens!

Phantom Pheedback

COVER LOVER

Dear Phantom,

Congratulations on 100 issues of **VideoScope**! Art director Kevin Hein has created an outstanding 100th cover, including the notorious Ro-Man, natch. This milestone issue will be a keepsake-collectible for years to come. I also liked last issue's (VS #99) cover featuring a pistol-packin' whip-wielding Helga (Malisa Longo), essentially another Ilsa (**She Wolf of the SS**) from the tawdrier corners of 1970s exploitation cinema.

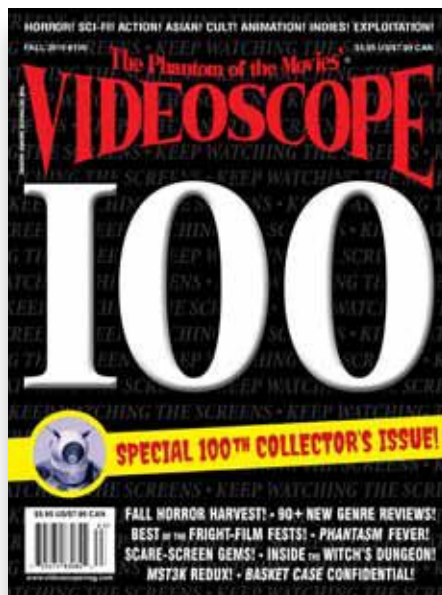
VS #100 contains a plenitude of good reading, including a discussion with the late Herk Harvey about his cult classic **Carnival of Souls**. I also enjoyed hearing from Don Coscarelli (and Simon Drax) re the **Phantasm** four, although for me the three sequels pale in comparison to the original 1979 Phantastic film that inducted The Tall Man into the postmodern classic horror lexicon. It's good to hear that a remastered version of the '79 flick is making its way around the country in 2016, and that there is a fifth installment in the series as well.

Thanks to Rob Freese for his look at **Blood Bath**, a Sixties shocker with a confusing production history resulting in no less than four separate films. I am not sure which version I caught on late-night TV ages ago, most likely it was **Portrait of Terror**. I personally would bump up Freese's 3/2 Ro-Man rating to a full three, although admittedly the story, at times, is almost as confusing as the film's convoluted production background. William Campbell does, however, give a fine performance as artist Antonio Sordi, and there are several effective sequences throughout. A nod to Arrow Video for releasing all four versions in one collection to finally set the **Blood Bath** record straight (as an arrow).

And now it's onward to VS #101, and more! Happy Halloween.

—Timothy Walters, Muskogee, OK

*Thanks for your kind cover words! **Phantasm's** The Tall Man, as embodied by a sinister Angus Scrimm, has indeed earned enshrinement as one of moviedom's most memorably menacing figures and makes a final appearance in the 2016 sequel **Phantasm: Ravager**, just out on Blu-ray and DVD via Well Go USA. Our critic Rob Freese went above and beyond viewing all four **Blood Bath** iterations over the course of a single red-eyed night. Arrow, meanwhile, continues to go the extra genre-movie mile with releases like its new **Herschell Gordon***



Lewis Feast, a 14-film, 17-disc (!) salute to the late Godfather of Gore, packed with extras galore.

CINE-CENTENNIAL

Dear Phantom,

First off, congratulations on your 100th issue! What an accomplishment! Your publication is one of the greatest cultural entertainment magazines out there, superb reviews! Great information! Let's talk about some of the fine points of this issue! Watched **Keanu**. I must admit Key and Peele had some funny moments, but they fell short in many areas of the film. Their routine became dull quickly. A great team that I recently enjoyed watching was the private eye team in the movie **The Nice Guys**. Can't wait to see **Don't Breathe**. The previews give me chills. For some reason, a blind war veteran who is revengeful and relentless is scary as all hell. I enjoyed the Herk Harvey interview on **Carnival of Souls**. Keeping things to budget is important and mistakes can happen, but if you don't have the money to correct them, you have to go with the flow. Recent movies I watched are **Captain America: Civil War**—definitely kept my attention, the action and special effects were over the top! **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles—Out of the Shadows**—very boring. **Huntsman: Winter's War**—I was disappointed in this movie. **Cell**: This was okay; I felt John Cusack and Samuel L. Jackson could have put more effort into their acting. Looking forward to seeing **The Conjuring 2**, **The Infiltrator** and **Neighbors 2**. Until next time!

—Paul Dale Roberts, via e-mail

Thanks go to all the phans who sent us their well wishes on our 100th Issue Anniversary, both via e-mail and on Facebook.

ZACH TO THE FUTURE

It was with a heavy heart that I read that Zacherley, "The Cool Ghoul," had passed on to that great crypt in the sky, at 98! It seems like only yesterday that I wrote you (VS #85) about **The New York Times** article on his 94th birthday. I have some great memories watching his show on Saturday nights and when it was over I would go out to pick up the Sunday papers. I am only sorry I never got to meet him in person at the many Chiller conventions he attended. Perhaps you might do a retrospect on his hosting career, as there many things I didn't know about him, such as his being a major during WWII, which **The Times** obituary mentioned. I know I, and many fans of VS, would love to see old videos of his show if they existed.

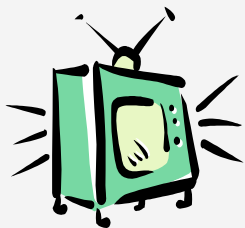
—Robert Buchfuhrer, NYC

*We were fortunate enough to run into Zach at several Chiller events and can testify that he was an exceedingly friendly and witty fellow. Meantime, you can continue to enjoy Zach on DVD via Legend Films' **Horrible Horror: The Special Edition**, assembling some five hours of Zacherley antics, including a then-new host segment shot specifically for the disc featuring The Cool Ghoul at his wittiest, along with vintage Zach videos, clips from Z-horror flicks like **The Snow Creature** and **Killers from Space**, and more. Another recommended compilation, **The Zacherley Archives**, is lamentably unavailable on disc but can be viewed gratis on YouTube (where, as of this writing, you can also hear Zach's brilliant 1990s anti-disco number "Eternal Polyester"). Other highlights include Zach's cameo as a gleefully eccentric TV weatherman in Frank Henenlotter's **Frankenhooker** and his cheerfully sinister voice-over performance as the little monster Aylmer in the same auteur's **Brain Damage** (both available via Synapse Films). Books like Richard Scrivani and Tom Weaver's **The Z Files: Treasures from Zacherley's Archives** (BearManor Media) and Scrivani's solo tome **Goodnight, Whatever You Are! My Journey with Zacherley, the Cool Ghoul** (Dinoship, Inc.) and CDs of Zach's classic LPs are also available via Amazon and other sources to help keep Zach's irreverent legacy alive.*

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The Phantom of the Movies'

NEW RELEASE SHELF

New release titles are followed by year, Phantom rating, director, lead actors, running time (with titles released in separate editions, the running time refers to the Unrated version), DVD and/or Blu-ray label and release date (month and year).

RATINGS KEY

⸮⸮⸮⸮
Couldn't be better

⸮⸮⸮1/2
Excellent

⸮⸮⸮
Good

⸮⸮1/2

Not bad; worth watching

⸮⸮

Mediocre, worthwhile for a particular thesp, director or genre

⸮1/2

Poor but may have points of interest

⸮

Just plain bad

1/2⸮

Even worse than that

0⸮

The pits

N/A

Not available on video

N.I.D.

Not in distribution

Special thanks go to Guidance Ro-Man for his ratings symbol suggestion.



BATMAN V. SUPERMAN: DAWN OF JUSTICE (2016)⸮⸮⸮

D: Zack Snyder. Ben Affleck, Henry Cavill, Amy Adams, Jesse Eisenberg, Diane Lane, Laurence Fishburne, Holly Hunter, Jeremy Irons, Gal Gadot. 152 mins. (Warner Home Entertainment) 7/16

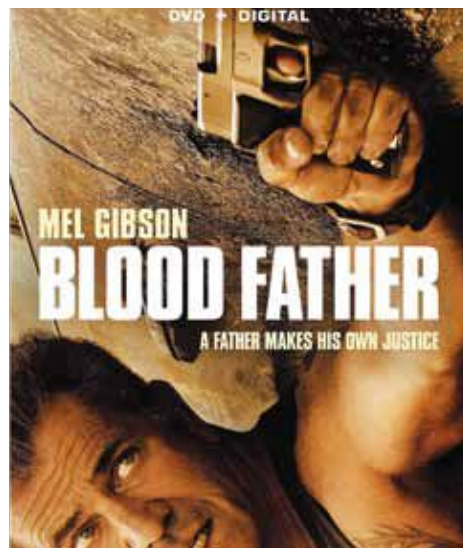
There's little suspense in the cliffhanger of an ending in this, the first of Warner's DC Comics Extended Universe franchise. We've all seen Superman die before. Since when has a little thing such as being deceased kept the Man of Steel down? Besides, Supe (Cavill) is already in the IMDb cast lists for the three (so far) sequels being readied for release over the next few years. And now to pose a question: Why does everyone hate this movie so much? Sure, some of the action sequences are a bit hard to follow, shot as they are with too many dizzying quick cuts. And there are a few

scenes which make little sense, such as the ghostly appearance by Kevin Costner as Pa Kent—or that bizarre sequence in which 10-year-old Bruce Wayne rises in flight as thousands of bats swirl around him. But overall, **Batman v. Superman** is a vast improvement over the pretentious, overly arty **Man of Steel** (VS #89), an infuriating film featuring many inexplicable hand-held shots and nonstop distracting CGI. The new film has its share of CGI, but this time auteur Snyder knows when to slow down to let the actors interact. The film takes a little time to delve into the lead characters' psyches. Personally, I like the idea of dark, angry superheroes. It gives these characters more depth, more shades of gray, and this humanizes them. I also loved seeing Lois Lane (Adams) and Perry White (Fishburne) acting, respectively, like an actual journalist and an actual newspaper editor. Having real-life journalists like CNN's Anderson Cooper and Soledad O'Brien, along with PBS's Charlie Rose, appear as themselves during interview sequences brought the story into the real world, sort of, and was a nice touch. Affleck and Cavill are superb as the two anti-heroes who mean well but can't seem to get over their anger issues. Affleck is particularly effective as a haunted Caped Crusader—he's filled with a chilling rage, unable to heal from the night his parents were murdered. This Batman is a monster right out of a horror movie, and yet his soft side manages to seep through every now and again. This is what a well-developed character should be, a little bit of dark and a little bit of light, to give the role balance. Eisenberg is a scene stealer as a madly manic Lex Luthor determined to bring the Man of Steel down because he fears Superman's God-like powers. It's the off-his-meds Luthor who moves the story forward, kidnapping Ma Kent (Lane) and resorting to blackmail to get the two antiheroes to fight to the death: it's a three-way battle between Superman, Batman and the terrifying monster Doomsday. **Batman v. Superman** is beautifully shot. Dark and gothic-looking, it's an unsettling film which shows how thin the line between good and evil actually is. I'll be damned if I know why this film has been so roundly vilified.

—David-Elijah Nahmod

BLOOD FATHER (2016)⸮⸮1/2

D: Jean-Francois Richet. Mel Gibson, Erin Moriarty, Diego Luna, Michael Parks, William H. Macy, Miguel Sandoval. 88 mins. (Lionsgate) 10/16



Mad Mel's back on the B beat in **Blood Father**, a middling **Taken** variation that, unabated by some cringe-inducing dialogue, proceeds sans the inventive urgency of Gibson's 2012 vehicle **Get the Gringo** (VS #84). Largely content to wallow in desolate trash-culture cliches, the film casts Mel as John Link, an ex-con, ex-alkie tattooist whose relatively tranquil trailer park existence is interrupted by the return of his prodigal daughter Lydia (Moriarty). Unlike Liam Neeson's perennially endangered innocent offspring, Lydia is an experienced and singularly unappealing teen lowlife who's just popped her gangster beau (Luna) and is being pursued by his murderous drug cartel-connected confederates. Though Lydia nominally softens as the reels roll on, she remains an unsympathetic character undeserving of her damaged dad's above-and-beyond efforts, which entail the usual shoot-outs and high-speed chases, to bail her out of her potentially lethal predicament. Longtime movie martyr Mel gets to suffer mightily throughout the film, on the way to a particularly painful climax. One puzzling detail: if the pic specifically takes place today, what's with the proliferation of roadside pay phones, including one on posh Santa Monica Boulevard? Vet thespas Macy and Parks lend dependable support, as Mel's AA sponsor neighbor and biker mentor-turned-nemesis, respectively. **Blood Father** rates a look for those in the mood for a Mel action fix, but the flick lacks the drive of many of his earlier efforts. Extras include the featurette **Lost Souls: On the Road with Blood Father**.

—The Phantom

CARETAKER (2016) ♂♂

D: Jeff Prugh. Meegan Warner, Sondra Kerr Blake, Sean Martini, Chanel Celaya, Barry Jenner, Sadie Stratton. 80 mins. (Level 33 Entertainment) 10/16

People often associate "American Gothic" horror with Edgar Allan Poe's Baltimore. However, Southern California can be as Gothic as Norma Desmond's Sunset Blvd. This Southland feature's protagonist is Birdie (Blake), a strange old lady whose sanity depends on the "meds" she is taking. This leads successive caretakers to leave their problem client, transferring their duties to her granddaughter Mallorie (Warner). Her handsome boyfriend August (Martini) balks when she assumes this new responsibility. Warner's best-known credit is the AMC series **Turn: Washington's Spies**. Here, she proves that she is also at home in a postmodern retro residence. Martini does not have to prove anything because viewers can see why Mallorie is torn between duty to Granny and life with August. Blake seems to echo her character's sadness; while older women confront the possibility of dementia, aging actresses face the prospect of playing demented crones. The old-fashioned decor and ancient records emphasize Birdie's anachronistic presence. Director Prugh relies on curiosity, not fright, to maintain audience interest.

—Ronald Charles Epstein

HELL OR HIGH WATER (2016) ♂♂♂

D: David Mackenzie. Jeff Bridges, Chris Pine, Ben Foster, Gil Birmingham, Dale Dickey, William Sterchi. 102 mins. (Lionsgate) 11/16

Bridges charismatically inhabits the grizzled country persona he's honed in films like **Crazy Heart** and the Coen Brothers' vivid re-imagining of **True Grit** in **Hell or High Water**, a modern western in the Coens' **No Country for Old Men** mode (though lacking the latter's bracing eccentricity and perversity). A parallel character study that alternates between bank-robbing brothers, reckless ex-con Tanner (Foster) and his sensible if economically desperate younger sibling Toby (Pine) and their pursuers, veteran Texas Ranger Marcus Hamilton (Bridges) and his half-Native American partner Alberto Parker (Birmingham), **Hell** paints a bleak portrait of a poverty-blitzed rural West Texas where, in the tradition of the James Brothers (our outlaws are ironically surnamed Howard, same as the siblings responsible for Jesse's legendary death), powerless citizens are routinely victimized by banks and other corporate parasites. Toby is about to lose his family's land due to the underhanded machinations of one such outfit, which is what spurs him to enlist his loose-cannon older 'bro to go on a crime spree in the first place. Fueled by Giles Nuttgens' evocatively deso-

late cinematography, a matching score by Nick Cave and Warren Ellis, and actor/writer Taylor Sheridan's credible dialogue, **Hell or High Water**, if not quite the masterwork some critics have hailed it, succeeds in involving the viewer in its tense, violent, inevitably tragic progress. Extras on Lionsgate's Blu-ray include the behind-the-scenes featurettes **Enemies Forever: The Characters of Hell or High Water**, **Visualizing the Heart of America**, **Damaged Heroes: The Performances of Hell or High Water**, along with a filmmaker Q&A and a Red Carpet Premiere segment.

—The Phantom

IMPERIUM (2015) ♂♂1/2

D: Daniel Ragussis. Daniel Radcliffe, Toni Collette, Tracy Letts, Sam Trammell, Nestor Carbonell, Chris Sullivan. 109 mins. (Lionsgate) 11/16

Erstwhile Harry Potter Radcliffe exhibits admirable range as Nate Foster, an FBI nerd selected to infiltrate a white supremacist group suspected of an incipient terror attack. While the diminutive office drone's transformation into a steely skinhead seems a bit too easy and abrupt, Radcliffe's charisma carries the day as he climbs the ladder from low-level racist thugs to the smooth theoreticians, led by a deceptively civilized Gerry Conway (Trammell), who control them. Writer/director Ragussis builds steady suspense most of the way, but his narrative, "inspired by actual events," sorely lacks the brutal grit of Tony Kaye's scalding **American History X** (VS #31) or Shane Meadows' uncompromising UK equivalent **This Is England** (VS #65), gradually devolving into an old-school TV movie treatise that merely skims the surface of its toxic topic. Collette comes off as a bit too blithe as Nate's immediate superior, though actor/playwright Tracy (Bug, Killer Joe) Letts lends conviction as a low-rent right-wing radio shill who's only in it for the money and thrills. Extras include an audio commentary by Ragussis and co-scripter Michael German, a **Living Undercover** featurette, making-of documentary, cast and crew interviews, and trailer gallery.

—The Phantom

INDIGNATION (2016) ♂♂♂

D: James Schamus. Logan Lerman, Sarah Gadon, Tracy Letts, Linda Emond, Ben Rosenfield, Pico Alexander. 111 mins. (Summit Entertainment) 11/16

Philip Roth ventures into **The Twilight Zone** (though to reveal precisely how would be to risk entering spoiler territory) in longtime producer (Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon)/debuting director Schamus' deft adaptation of the prolific octogenarian author's 2008 novel of the same name. Lerman is dead-on as young Marcus

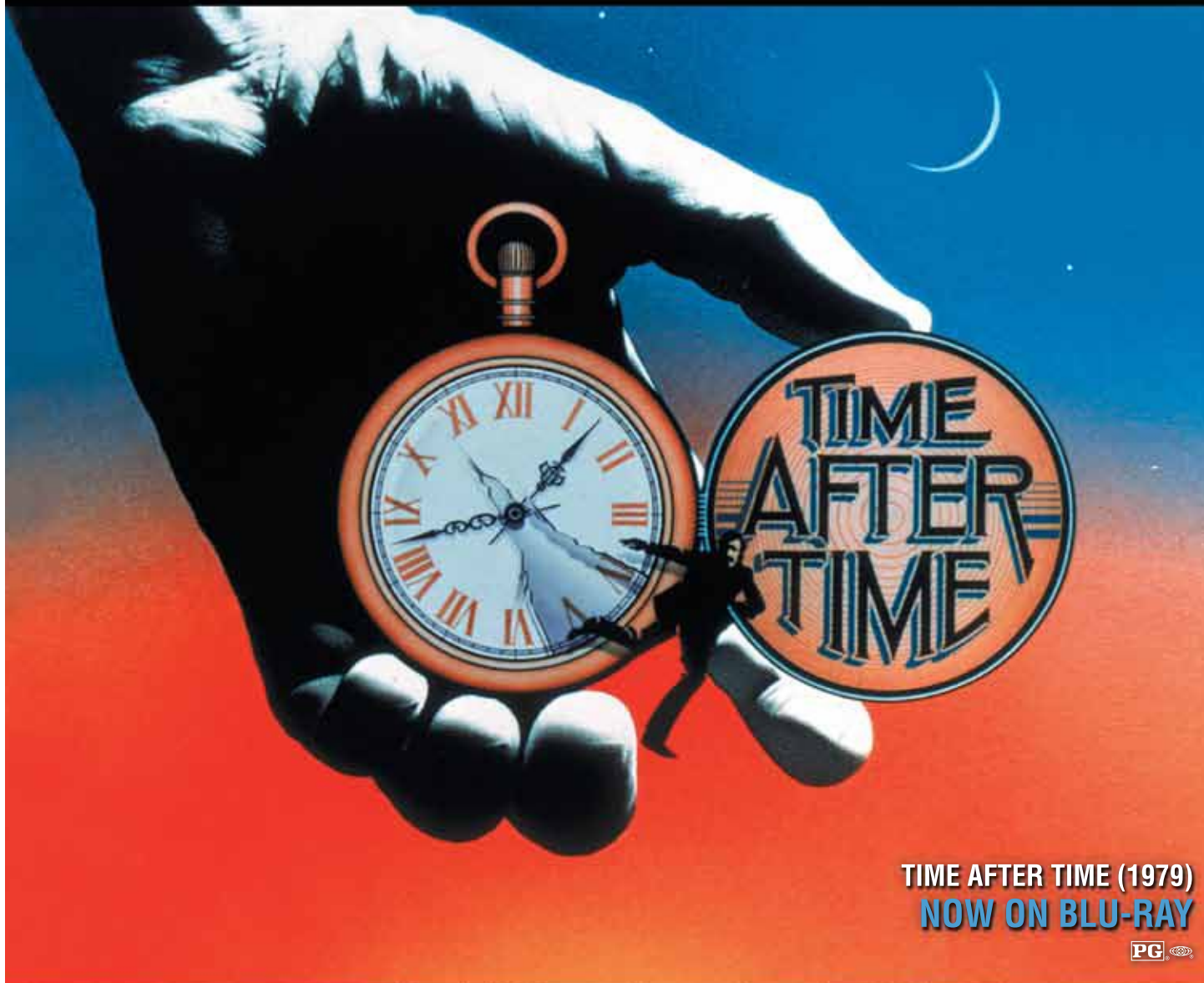


Messner, a 1951 Newark high-school grad who's earned a scholarship to mostly gentile Winesburg College in Ohio, where he's promptly quartered with two other Jewish students. It's not long before Marcus is at irreconcilable odds with the pair, partly due to his unexpectedly provocative date with *shiksa* coed Olivia Hutton (a charismatic Gadon). Our ironic coming-of-age story hinges on Marcus' uneasy relationship with the bright but clearly unhinged Olivia, his contentious verbal showdowns with insufferable control-freak college head Dean Caudwell (a brilliant Letts, late of **Imperium**), and his mother (Emond), who pays a surprise visit to the campus with some alarming news from home. In a twist that will strike a familiar chord with boomers a generation Roth's junior, a foreign war is raging (at this juncture in Korea rather than Vietnam) and Marcus' college deferment may be his only defense against a potential combat death, the sort that's already claimed the lives of many contemporaries, including a former high-school classmate. That very real fear, looming like a lethal shadow, adds an undercurrent of extreme anxiety and mounting suspense to what is, on the surface, a fairly standard tale of adolescent maturation, and director Schamus, who also adapted Roth's novel, milks it for maximum effect. **Indignation** is the type of film whose pieces may fail to fall neatly in place at first sight but will leave the viewer pondering its multiple, sometimes seemingly subliminal ironies long after the end credits roll. Blu-ray extras include two behind-the-scenes featurettes, **Timeless: Connecting the Past to the Present** and **Perceptions: Bringing Philip Roth to the Screen**.

—The Phantom

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The Phantom's ROCK BLOCK

IT'S A ROCKABILLY WORLD (2016)

8881/2

D: Brent Huff. 76 mins. (Virgil Films) 10/16

Actor-turned-documentarian Huff (best remembered in these parts as Sho Kosugi's young ally in 1985's **9 Deaths of the Ninja**), whose previous verite efforts include **Behind the Orange Curtain** and **Chasing Beauty**, assembles a super-fun look at a thriving retro rockabilly subculture defined by Gretsch guitars, '50s trash fashions, mile-high pomps and, in the cult's most dedicated quarters, elaborately customized vintage cars. First and foremost, though, is the musical genre, a cookin' three-chord blend of country, rock, and blues first forged in the mid-'50s, mostly by Sun Records artists like Elvis, Jerry Lee Lewis and Carl Perkins and further popularized by Buddy Holly, Gene Vincent, and Eddie Cochran, among others. The uptempo riffs and youthful lyrics were often animated by jumpin' performances featuring swiveling singers, slick guitarists and slap-bass maniacs supported by snare-driven drums. The form experienced a major revival in the late '70s with the arrival of new wave interpreters like The Stray Cats, Robert Gordon, and The Blasters, along with the reemergence of such seasoned vets as now-79-year-old Elvis-wigged Jimmy Angel, a roots Memphian (and Presley classmate!) later allegedly juiced by NYC mob ties (he served for a time as the Italian-American Anti-Defamation League's literal poster boy). Huff and crew tour the entire contempo rockabilly scene at a brisk but never hurried pace, introducing us to a wide range of aficionados like former Disney TV mainstay Drake Bell, UK adapter Tom Polecat, Japanese rocker Eitaro Sako and fashion diva Kandy K., among many other colorful devotees, including elaborately tatted cool cats and hot pin-up girl kittens. The music gets a workout as well, though the disc would have further benefited from some bonus complete performances added as extras. Still, **It's a Rockabilly World** rates as a truly infectious account that will rope you in even if you thought you didn't give a hoot, holler or rebel yell about this singular scene.

THE T.A.M.I. SHOW (1964)B&W

8888

D: Steve Binder. Chuck Berry, James Brown, Jan and Dean, The Rolling Stones, The Supremes. 112 mins.

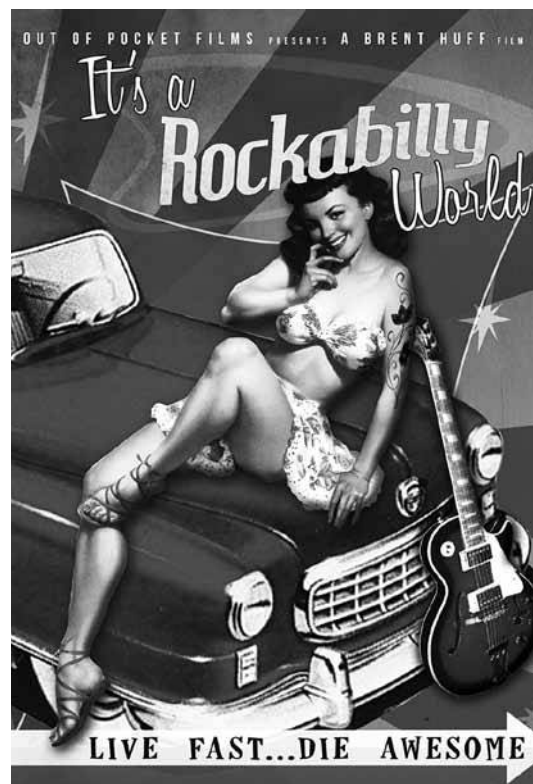
THE BIG T.N.T. SHOW (1965)B&W

8881/2

D: Larry Peerce. The Byrds, Bo Diddley, Ray Charles, David McCallum, The Ronettes. 93 mins. (Shout! Factory 2-disc Blu-ray \$29.98) 12/16

Shout! performs a major service for music fans by salvaging a deuce of elusive filmed concerts that briefly played both the theatrical and Pay-TV circuits. We were fortunate enough to catch a rare bijou showing of **The T.A.M.I. Show** back in the day and the assembled acts have only grown in cultural and entertainment value over the intervening decades. Surfer-boy hosts Jan and Dean wisely retain a low profile, relinquishing the stage to many musical greats then at the height of their performing powers. James Brown, in particular, aided by his Famous Flames and knockout backup band, puts on an amazing act that was largely responsible for introducing his vocal pyrotechnics, stage theatrics, and seemingly impossible footwork to a wide, white audience—all well before he recorded most of his best-known hits. It's also instructive to watch the Stones, placed in the unenviable position of following the Godfather of Soul, hold their own, with Mick Jagger spontaneously and brazenly lifting JB's moves in broad spotlight! Then again, there's not a lame act to be found in this entire seminal concert, though some, like Chuck Berry, deserved more stage time (he basically splits his segment with, bizarrely enough, the fleeting though fairly engaging Brit Invaders Gerry and the Pacemakers). Even the relatively obscure garage band The Barbarians are given room for two tunes, including their signature song "Are You a Boy or Are You a Girl?" Extras on Shout!'s essential time capsule include a fascinating commentary by director Binder (himself only 23 at the time and working his first important gig), the original trailer with commentary by filmmaker/fan John Landis, and radio spots.

Directed by Larry Peerce, fresh from the previous year's brilliant interracial drama **One Potato, Two Potato** (still not available for home viewing—some innovative label needs to step up and get on the stick), **The Big T.N.T. Show** emerges less as an eclectic rock concert in the **T.A.M.I.** mold than an out-and-out musical variety show. Thus folkies like Joan Baez and a then-hot Donovan (the latter responsible for the film's draggiest segment) share stage time with country novelty singer/songwriter Roger Miller, one-of-a-kind roots rocker Bo Diddley, supercharged R&B duo Ike & Tina Turner, and mainstream vocalist Petula Clark, among many others. The result is a fun mix and mash-up of musical styles. Like Jan and Dean, nominal host David (**The Man from U.N.C.L.E.**) McCallum maintains a low profile, mock-leading the house band (most recruited from the ace L.A. studio musicians later known as The Wrecking Crew) in a couple of instrumental covers (including what sounds like a George Martinized "Satisfaction") but otherwise keeping out of the way. As he did on **The T.A.M.I. Show**, **West Side Story** alum and future direct-to-video action-movie mogul David Winters devises the jiggle-crazed choreography. Bonus features include interviews with Petula Clark, Lovin' Spoonful frontman John Sebastian, and



musician-turned-photographer Henry Diltz, who supply cogent behind-the-scenes anecdotes. Shout!'s superlative set also includes a commemorative 36-page booklet. Be there or be square!

SOUNDBREAKING: STORIES FROM THE CUTTING EDGE OF RECORDED MUSIC

(2016)8888

D: Jeff Dupre, Maro Chermayoff. 425 mins.

(RLJ Entertainment 3-disc Blu-ray and DVD \$49.99 each) 11/16

Produced in association with pioneering Beatles arranger Sir George Martin, who recently passed on at age 90, this brilliant eight-part PBS series traces the long history of music recording advances, formats and techniques, covering everything from acoustic folk and amplified blues to intricate jazz, hard rock, computer-driven techno and sample-happy hip-hop. Among the talking heads who share their expertise are Pink Floyd sound wizard Roger Waters, late, great blues master B.B. King, contemporary producer Linda Perry, rapper Chuck D and literally scores more, along with a generous array of performance clips vintage and new. While never feeling rushed, **Soundbreaking** packs an amazing amount of enlightening info into its runtime. We consumed the set over the course of a two-night marathon and were left hoping that, with a virtual infinity of ground yet to be covered, directors Chermayoff and Dupre will see their way to keeping the series going. Extras on RLJ's set include a fun drumming session with the seemingly eternal Ringo Starr, an archival segment with electric guitar innovator Les Paul, bonus footage with George Martin and Elton John, plus a 20-page booklet.8

THE LEGEND OF TARZAN (2016)

888

D: David Yates. Alexander Skarsgard, Rory J. Saper, Christian Stevens, Christoph Waltz, Samuel L. Jackson, Margot Robbie, Djimon Hounsou, Casper Crump, Yule Masiteng. 110 mins. (Warner Home Video) 10/16

This John Clayton, Lord Greystoke (Skarsgard), has put the jungle behind him and, swaddled in material comforts, is living the high life in 1890 Victorian England. Unbeknownst to him, the unscrupulous Leon Rom (Waltz), in service to the even more unscrupulous King Leopold II of Belgium, has, after a spellbinding opening martial action sequence, made a deal with the imposing, Tarzan-hating Chief Mbonga (Hounsou, of *Gladiator* fame) to trade the unsuspecting Clayton for access to the region's diamonds. Enter acerbic, edgy George Washington Williams (Jackson), an American envoy (historically unlikely, but let's not quibble) imbued by experience of the recent fight for African-American emancipation, needling Clayton to understand that Leopold was granted the Congo by the European powers under the guise of doing humanitarian work and in exchange for free trade but has turned the Congo into a slave colony. Once Williams convinces the once and future Tarzan to reclaim his crown as King of the Apes in order to vanquish the evildoers, this superb, nonstop, postmodern action adventure takes off with a Tarantinoesque script filled with clever in-jokes, homages, a fateful appearance by elephants and, yes, at the very end, saved for last, the immortal Tarzan yelp. Thankfully, the fainting Janes are a thing of the past, and Waltz, in temperament and accent, is the ideal villain, chivalrously threatening a fearless *Charlie's Angels*-style

Jane (Robbie) who, uninvited, tags along, inflicting her own mayhem. Rom's henchman Major Kerckhover (Crump) is sadistically perfect; people are hung over the sides of ships, shot on trains while Williams, struggling to stay alive, keeps up the patter. Tarzan, of course, is captured and, reliving via flashbacks his ape childhood, is reunited with his brother ape Akut, who mauls him half to death (the animatronics are occasionally ludicrous), then joins the war on Chief Mbonga. Man betrays but Tarzan can always rely on the crocodiles for the standout final scenes. Skarsgard trained for four months and is in top body beautiful form but lacks the inner torment and charm, not necessarily required here, which inform my favorite postmodern Tarzan, Christopher Lambert in Hugh Hudson's 1984 *Greystoke: The Legend of Tarzan, Lord of the Apes* (VS #90). Warner's Blu-ray arrives with multiple behind-the-scenes featurettes, including *Tarzan Reborn* and the three-part doc *Battles and Bare Knuckle Brawls*.

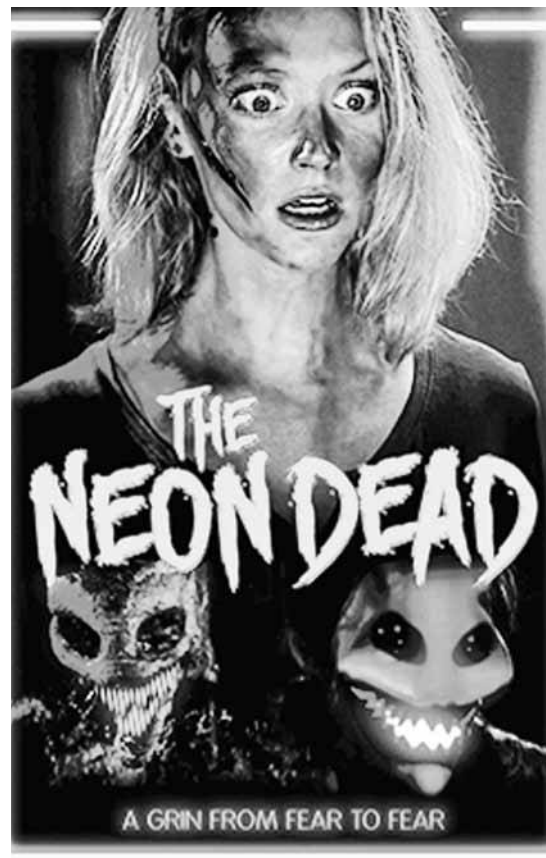
—Nancy Naglin

MÉCANIX (2003) 888

D: Rémy M. Larochelle. Stéphane Bilo-deau, Julie-Anne Côté. 70 mins. (MVD Visual) 7/16

In a nightmare world where humans are slaves of monstrous beings, a young man discovers the secret of the "embryo"—the origin of everything and the only thing the beasts fear. So the synopsis on the DVD case goes, and having that information is certainly helpful in interpreting the barrage of unsettling images that unspools on the screen. The film's narrative approach is impressionistic, and a linear summary of what goes on does it an injustice, in the same way that summarizing a nightmare, a poem or a painting is misleading. Filmed in dark sepia tones, the French-Canadian *Mécanix* gives us humans interacting with puppets and stop-motion animation. The monsters are wonderfully horrible creations, mixtures of skeleton and machine, and the sound design is a cacophony of shrieks and clanks and moans. The effect is rather like a Brothers Quay feature with some seriously hardcore gore. Decay, mutilation, death and vivisection are all part of the parade of grotesquerie. At 70 minutes, the film does sometimes feel a bit long as images are repeated, losing some of their impact, but all in all, this is a powerful work and utterly uncompromising. The DVD includes an interview with director Larochelle and producer Philippe Chabot.

—David Annandale

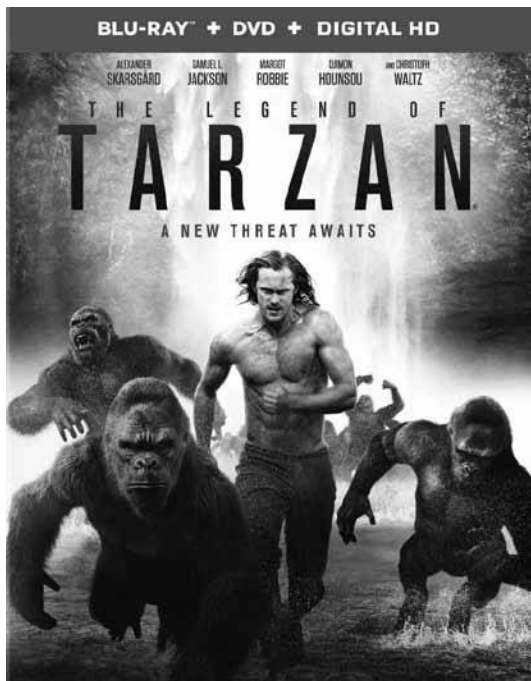


THE NEON DEAD (2015) 881/2

D: Torey Haas. Marie Barker, Greg Garrison, Dylan Schettina, Nathan DeRussy, Josie Levy, John Reed, Mark Ashworth. 81 mins. (Wild Eye Releasing) 9/16

If you are being haunted by malevolent supernatural forces, who ya gonna call? If you live in the Atlanta metropolitan area, you can try Desmond (Garrison) and Jake (Schettina). When job-hunting graduate Allison Hillstead (Barker) hires those two low-tech ghostbusters to exorcise problem voodoo zombies, viewers wonder if the goofs can face the challenge. This feature is an example of a DIY horror comedy that relies on a creative director, resourceful crew and a dedicated cast. Barker holds her own as the contemporary millennial who bravely tries to ward off the spirits who haunt her house and deflect the exorcist who wants to occupy her bed. Garrison has to walk a fine line between picaresque and skeezy because this may not be the age of the horny hero. People who wonder why Jason Schwartzman never played a disembodied head may enjoy his indie counterpart portray a slacker who coolly copes with his strange new state. The various supernatural beings look creepy in an economical manner—more "boo" for your buck? Director Haas' commentary track is remarkably honest; he may educate future auteurs while he promotes his project. This means that *The Neon Dead* may be found in film schools, as well as North America's declining number of video stores.

—Ronald Charles Epstein





SUBTERRANEA (2016) 88 1/2

D: Mathew Miller. Bug Hall, Nicholas Turturro, William Katt, Amber Rose Mason. 99 mins. (MVD Visual) 10/16

An unnamed man (Hall), having been held in an underground cell his entire life and having had no human contact beyond voices outside a steel door, is suddenly thrust into the world. Stumbling through the terrifying clamor of the urban environment, he is initially befriended by a homeless Turturro, who promptly takes advantage of his naïveté and makes him an unwilling accomplice to violent crimes. Escaping Turturro, Hall is taken in by Mason, who provides him with sanctuary and true friendship. Together, they begin the quest to find out who Hall is. The people behind his imprisonment, though, are far from done with him. Caught in the web of a mysterious conspiracy, Hall does not know whom to trust, and the closer he gets to answers, the more desperate his situation becomes. Though the idea of a mysterious incarceration and sudden, equally mysterious liberation is reminiscent of *Oldboy*, writer/director Miller's film follows a very different thematic path and, though it is plenty dark, it is nowhere near as corrosive. *Subterranea* makes the most of its Missoula setting, taking us from gritty urban decay to stunning natural splendor. The cinematic approach is generally a flat realism, and the stylized moments that break this up are welcome. The performances are good, with Turturro making a strong, discomfiting impression, and it's fun seeing erstwhile *Greatest American Hero* Katt on screen. The mystery is an interesting one, but the resolution is disappointing and unconvincing. I couldn't buy it, and so the philosophical question explored by the film lacked a strong foundation. Still, I have to admire the film's ambition to tackle a lot on a very modest budget. A solid effort, then, if it doesn't quite stick the landing.

—David Annandale

VIDEO VERITE

THEY CAME FROM THE SWAMP: THE FILMS OF WILLIAM GREFE (2016) 88 8

D: Daniel Griffith. William Grefe, Steve Alaimo, Doug Hobart, Gary Crutcher, Randy Grinter, Fred Olen Ray, Frank Henenlotter, Chris Poggiali. 126 mins. (Ballyhoo Home Entertainment 2-disc \$29.99) 7/16

In-depth and thorough, this entertaining look at Florida filmmaker William Grefe is everything you want it to be about the guy who put a plastic garbage bag over a stuntman's head and told him to stomp around the Everglades as the jellyfish monster in *Sting of Death*. Grefe may not be as well known as other '60s and '70s drive-in kings like Ted Mikels and Al Adamson, but his films were unquestionable hits on the ozoner circuits and he has more than made his mark on cinema, both with his colorful output of flicks (including stuff like *Death Curse of Tartu*, *Wild Rebels* [VS #79]), *Jaws of Death* and *Stanley*, among many more) and as an inspiration for aspiring filmmakers such as Fred Olen Ray, who shot his first film in Florida and then later basically remade (unofficially) *Tartu* as *Scalps*. Grefe is an amiable and instantly likeable fellow as well as a gifted and resourceful filmmaker who was also a good businessman and got his films on screens where they played endless double and triple bills throughout the summer months. His hit *Wild Rebels* made distributor Crown International a fortune and was the first film to exploit the popularity of Roger Corman's *The Wild Angels* (VS #41). The interviews here cover everyone from people who worked with Grefe both in front of and behind the camera, fellow filmmakers, and enthusiastic fans. In addition to comments by directors Ray and Henenlotter, the late Herschell Gordon Lewis and Dave Friedman weigh in on how influential and inspiring Grefe was to the Florida filmmaking scene back in the day. There are fun anecdotes and remembrances shared, and director/editor Griffith keeps the pace moving from one film to the next. This initial special edition 2-disc set is limited to 1,000 copies. Extras include the short documentary *The Crown Jewels*, a look at Crown International Pictures, deleted scenes, two short Grefe films featuring William Shatner (who starred in Grefe's *Impulse*), trailer gallery and the redneck actioner *Whiskey Mountain*, starring Christopher George, presented here for the first time on home-video in its original widescreen aspect ratio. I don't know what will be offered after this 2-disc set is gone, but fans of the gentleman filmmaker are urged to purchase this edition pronto. Up next for director Griffith is *Celluloid Wizards in the Video Wasteland: The Saga of Empire Pictures!*

—Rob Freese



Phantom Phlashboard

KINO VIDEO

(\$29.95 Blu-ray) 10/16

WOLF LAKE (1980) 88 8

D: Burt Kennedy. Rod Steiger, David Huffman, Robin Mattson, Jerry Hardin, Richard Herd, Paul Mantee. 88 mins.

A 'Namsploitation *Straw Dogs*, *Wolf Lake* stars an intense but controlled Steiger as Charlie, an embittered self-styled patriot who heads an annual Canadian hunting vacation with fellow WWII vets George (Herd), Sweeney (Mantee, of *Robinson Crusoe on Mars* fame), and the subservient Wilbur (Hardin), a bullying Charlie's personal fall guy. Upon airborne arrival at the rural locale, an aggro Charlie immediately butts heads and rifles with the lodge's new caretaker David (Huffman), who he soon learns deserted his outfit in Vietnam. Not content with baiting his new nemesis, Charlie attempts to incite his buddies into setting their sights on David's hippie squeeze Linda (Mattson), leading to the inevitable showdown. While not neglecting the expected outdoor action tropes, western-movie ace Kennedy (*The Tall T*, *Ride Lonesome*) crams his script with the kind of confrontational generational hostility that further rent the cultural fabric of that frayed era, with Charlie ultimately blaming David for his own son's combat-related death. While overtly conjuring Sam Peckinpah's earlier, higher-profiled *Straw Dogs*, Kennedy carves *Wolf Lake* a strong identity all its own. Kudos to Kino for easing this underseen indie, earlier available on the Prism Entertainment VHS label, out of oblivion and into the light. Extras include interviews with Mexico-based producer Lance Hool, who spins fascinating back yarns about this production and his subsequent American movie adventures, and octogenarian actors/real-life friends Hardin and Herd, who likewise share their *Wolf Lake* memories. 8

The Phantom's NOIR GANG

THE FILM DETECTIVE

(\$14.95 Blu-ray) 10/16

SUDDENLY (1954) B&W 88 1/2

D: Lewis Allen. Frank Sinatra, Sterling Hayden, Nancy Gates, James Gleason, Kim Charney, Christopher Dark, Paul Frees. 75 mins.

It's a well-known oddity that Frank Sinatra played central roles in not one but two films that obliquely presaged the assassination of his friend JFK. In Allen's lean suspenser, unfolding over the course of a single afternoon, Old Blue Eyes plays the would-be killer John Baron, arguably his lone unsympathetic screen character, while some eight years later, in John Frankenheimer's higher-profiled **The Manchurian Candidate** (VS #53), he would portray the hero racing to foil a similar plot. While Baron's personality profile—the previously untapped psychopath who learns to kill and love it during war-time—was a common one in films dating back to post-World War I (see Bogie's hair-triggered counterpart in Raoul Walsh's **The Roaring Twenties**), the singer-turned-actor adds much nervous nuance to his character, one overly eager to explain himself to his hostages—most especially duty-bound small-town sheriff Tod Shaw (an unusually emotive Hayden)—as Baron and two henchmen, Bart Wheeler (Dark) and Benny Conklin (ace voice artist Frees, who doubles as an unseen TV announcer), set up a high-powered rifle in hopes of shooting the President during a brief stopover to switch trains. Allen and scripter Richard Sale build tension to a fever pitch while grappling with such contemporaneous themes as the nature of patriotism and the necessity of violence (vehemently opposed by gun-hating war widow Ellen Benson [Gates] in an effective running riff). Allen cuts between the stifling tension unfolding in the house, also occupied by Ellen's plucky eight-year-old son (Charney) and retired Secret Service agent pop (Gleason), with the elaborate security detail patrolling the streets below, adopting a semi-verite approach that wisely stops short of deadpan **Dragnet**-style dramatics. Surprisingly brutal for its time, **Suddenly** not only holds up well today but finally receives the restoration it's long deserved, thanks to the tech wizards at The Film Detective, who present a crisp black-and-white edition in its proper wide-screen ratio. Years after the film's initial release, Sinatra sought to have **Suddenly** pulled from further distribution after learning that Lee Harvey Oswald allegedly watched it only a month before JFK's assassination. Ironically enough, a copyright bungle allowed **Suddenly** (like **It's a Wonderful Life**

before it and **Night of the Living Dead** after) to fall into public domain, assuring its proliferation on TV (where we first caught it decades ago) and, when home video came along, on dozens of fly-by-night bargain labels. Sinatra had more success temporarily shelving **The Manchurian Candidate**, though that too surfaced on television and at retro theaters before Frank lifted his attempted ban prior to the film's 1989 VHS special edition (in which he participated in a post-screening discussion) and attendant select theatrical reissue. Bottom line: If you've never seen **Suddenly**, this is the version to get; if you have, this is the one to revisit for maximum impact.

KINO LORBER FILMS

(\$29.95 Blu-ray) 9/16

ROAD HOUSE (1948) B&W 88 1/2

D: Jean Negulesco. Ida Lupino, Cornell Wilde, Celeste Holm, Richard Widmark, O.Z. Whitehead, Robert Karnes. 95 mins.

Ida shines as Lily Stevens, a chain-smokin' hot chanteuse whose lubricious vocal stylings leave nary a dry lap in the house after she signs on to sing at the titular locale, a popular Northern resort town nightspot owned by Jefferson Robbins (Widmark), an unstable entrepreneur easily driven to jealousy. Said emotion is soon aroused when Jeff's club manager friend Pete Morgan (Wilde) develops an untoward interest in the new entertainer, one that's ultimately reciprocated. The situation also doesn't sit well with Pete's professed gal, cashier Susie Smith (Holm), who senses her beau's growing distance. Director Negulesco succeeds in sustaining an air of mounting tension, while Widmark expertly sells Jeff's gradual descent into psychosis, at least until the climax, when the actor is forced to resort to his cackling Tommy Udo moves, a schtick that Widmark, according to an excellent bonus featurette, **Killer Instinct: Richard Widmark and Ida Lupino at Twentieth Century Fox**, had grown to mightily resent. (Even portraying the hero in Elia Kazan's powerful plague thriller **Panic in the Streets** two years later, the actor coughed up a brief cackle or two.) At the end of the day, indeed deep into the night, **Road House** remains Ida's show and one wonders if the film might have been stronger had she been hired on to direct as well; future intense helming assignments like **The Hitch-Hiker** (VS #25) would seem to support that contention. In any case, for noir fans **Road House** is well worth visiting as it stands. In addition to the featurette, Kino's Blu-ray includes audio commentary by film noir historians Kim Morgan and Eddie Muller, plus a noir trailer gallery.

WARNER ARCHIVE

(\$21.99 DVD) 7/16

A CRY IN THE NIGHT (1956) B&W 88 1/2

D: Frank Tuttle. Edmond O'Brien, Brian Donlevy, Natalie Wood, Raymond Burr, Richard Anderson, Irene Hervey. 75 mins.



Strange to see such a stellar cast—most notably Wood, fresh from her head-turning triumph as James Dean's budding squeeze in Nicholas Ray's iconic **Rebel Without a Cause**—stuck in a frankly bare-bones B movie like **A Cry in the Night**. The rather simple set-up finds teenage Liz Taggart (Wood) snatched from a lovers lane rendezvous with way older-looking beau Owen Clark (Anderson, 30 at the time) by voyeuristic Oedipal wreck Harold Loftus (a pre-Perry Mason Burr, quite compelling here as the semi-Lenny-like psycho), who confusedly holds her hostage at his secret hideout. As it happens, Liz is the daughter of hard-line cop Capt. Dan Taggart (O'Brien in a familiar role), who insists on aiding, in obstructive heavy-handed fashion, assigned investigator Capt. Ed Bates (a typically dogged Donlevy) in cracking the case. Director Tuttle, earlier responsible for such '40s noir classics as **This Gun for Hire** and **Suspense** (VS #73), cuts between the literal chase and nocturnal precinct routines, some creaky enough—from a gold-digging blond floozy (Tina Carver) to a desk clerk (Herb Vigran) specializing in dopey double-takes—to have been lifted intact from the corniest of '30s crime comedies. Even more baffling, the pic was produced by Alan Ladd's Jaguar Productions, whose roster included "A" titles like the war films **Deep Six** and **All the Young Men** (though it also cranked out second features like **Island of Lost Women**). Rather than emerging as a trite time-waster, though, **A Cry in the Night** remains fascinating for its very deficiencies—occasionally interrupted by stretches of solid suspense—and rates as a must-see obscurity for noir completists. 8

Rob Freese's DRIVE-IN DELIRIUM!

SCORPION RELEASING

(\$19.95 DVD) 2/14

FORCE: FIVE (1981) ♂♂♂

D: Robert Clouse. Joe Lewis, Bong Soo Han, Sonny Barnes, Richard Norton, Benny Urquidez, Pam Huntington. 95 mins.

All-American good guy Jim Martin (Lewis) is hired to assemble a team of ass-kickers to infiltrate enlightenment peddler Reverend Rhee's (Soo Han) island paradise to find a missing senator's daughter and bring her home. The Reverend is dirty, bilking rich white kids of their trust funds, then using the easy money to buy guns to sell to terrorists all around the world. Martin contacts his old army buddies to mobilize for the mission, including breaking one out of a swanky prison. The screen can hardly contain all the high-kicking thrills and fist-punching action that ensue. The film gathers some truly great fighters and lets them have plenty of time to do what they do best. It's weird that Lewis didn't have a bigger career as an action-movie star, considering his good looks and amazing martial-arts skills. (He is considered one of the greatest karate/kickboxing champions of all time.) Norton got his start in the Chuck Norris kick-a-thon **The Octagon** (VS #97) playing dual roles, including the menacing masked mercenary Kyo. (He also recently appeared as The Prime Imperator in **Mad Max: Fury Road** [VS #97]) and worked as fight coordinator on the '16 summer comic book flick **Suicide Squad**.) Many will recognize Soo Han as Dr. Klahn from the **Enter the Dragon** parody segment **A Fistful of Yen** in **Kentucky Fried Movie**. (I

kept waiting for him to say, "We are building a fighting force of extraordinary magnitude.") Urquidez was a champion fighter, winning the world light middleweight championship at age 42 against a 25-year-old opponent. He remains active as an actor and stunt performer in films like **1408** and **Con Air**. Barnes worked with Clouse in a number of flicks. Huntington is easy on the eyes but isn't given much to do. She also costarred in the kung-fu comedy **They Call Me Bruce?** (due soon on Blu-ray courtesy of the hard-working folks at Code Red). Amanda Wyss, appearing here as Mandy Wyss, makes her big-screen debut as the senator's daughter, as does comic actor Tom Villard, who followed this up with Charles Band's 3-D sci-fi monster movie **Parasite**. Most fans of drive-in double and triple features will no doubt know about director Clouse's amazing output, which includes the Bruce Lee classic **Enter the Dragon**, **The Ultimate Warrior**, **Black Belt Jones**, **The Pack**, **Deadly Eyes** and the unforgettable Cannon-produced **Gymkata**, among many others. This is the kind of movie I would have stayed up late to watch on HBO with my brother when we were kids. If you're an action junkie and groove on the early '80s kung-fu scene, **Force: Five** is the most wonderful comfort food for your weary eyes. Extras include the original theatrical trailer and a gaggle of Scorpion Releasing trailers.

SCREAM FACTORY

(\$22.99 Blu-ray) 9/16

METALSTORM—THE DESTRUCTION OF JARED-SYN 3-D (1983) ♂♂1/2

D: Charles Band. Jeffrey Byron, Michael Preston, Tim Thomerson, Kelly Preston, Richard Moll, R. David Smith. 84 mins.

Space ranger Dogen (Byron) pursues the diabolical warlock Jared-Syn (Michael Preston) to Lemuria, a desert planet where a third of the population work in mines looking for crystals, another third only have one eye and walk around the wasteland defending their honor, and the final third drive around in **Road Warrior**-esque vehicles, tearing up the terrain. Jared-Syn has no problem convincing the locals he can take them to a new dimension with the power of the red crystals that suck out people's souls and feed a bigger crystal. Jared-Syn's cyborg son Baal (Smith) uses a sweet robotic arm to scare the bejaysus out of people and squirt a fluid that whisks them to another dimension where his dad can talk smack to them. Dogen finds Dhyana (Kelly Preston) after her miner father is killed by Baal, and they join forces to locate the Lost City, where Jared-Syn is hiding. Dogen also employs burnt-out soldier Rhodes (Thomerson) to assist on his journey. Their adventure includes an attack by sand snakes, pit fighting with cyclopean giant Hurok (Moll), and some low-budget **Road Warrior** vehicular hijinks. When Dogen finally con-



fronts Jared-Syn, he saves Dhyana from being sacrificed to the crystal, but the baddie hops on an air cycle and flies into a dimensional warp. Dogen follows but loses him. Somewhere there is a sequel that never got made. It's in that dimensional warp, no doubt. Okay, first things first. I'm not gonna call like this is a great movie. Heck, it's kind of confusing, but I can at least say it's no more confusing than any other Band flick from the same era. And sure, technically, there is no "metalstorm," and Jared-Syn is never destroyed. Actually, he gets away! So there are two lies just in the title. I can accept all that mainly because this has just about everything you can want from a 3-D flick, with some great desert landscapes and plenty of stuff being thrown at the screen. Baal's robotic arm coming at you in 3-D is as cool now to me as a middle-aged man as it was in the 3-D theatrical trailer I saw just before **Jaws 3-D** (VS #99) when I was 13. (Universal picked up the independently produced pic to have a quick follow-up to its 3-D mechanical shark attack flick.) There is great dimensional photography of the mines, some cool crash and burns (including exploding air cycles) and one guy goes through a windshield and lands right in your living room. Band easily delivered one of the best-looking 3-D flicks of the early '80s. Without a perfect mix of excellent 3-D shenanigans and cold Miller High Lites, this flick can tend to be a bit of a confusing bore. Scram Factory should be commended for its beautiful 3-D presentation, showing the film the way it was intended. (There was a pan-and-scan DVD released in 2010, which is a horribly claustrophobic way to watch the 2.35:1 widescreen flick.) Extras include both a 3-D and 2-D presentation, a **High Noon at the End of the Universe** featurette, extensive artwork and behind-the-scenes stills gallery, trailer and radio spots. Again, I'm not telling you this is a great movie, but if you're set up with a 3-D home theater, it is definitely worth a watch, especially if you have sci-fi loving kids. (Watch 'em squirm when old Baal comes off the screen after them!) ♂

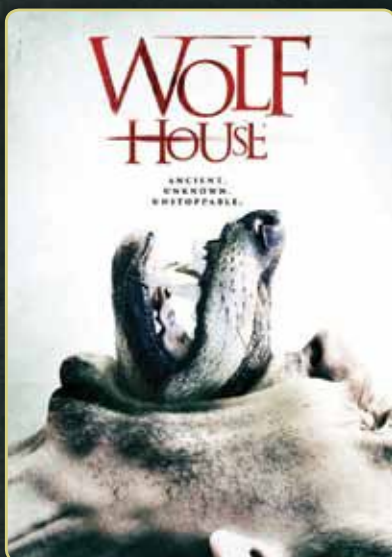


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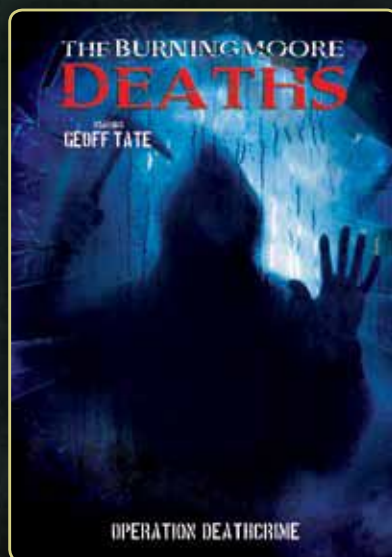
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Giant Alligator terrorizes college students in small town during Spring Break.



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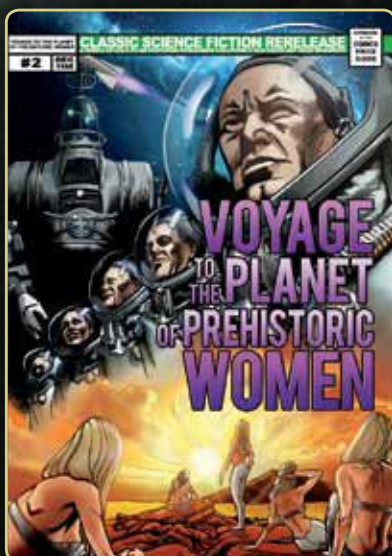
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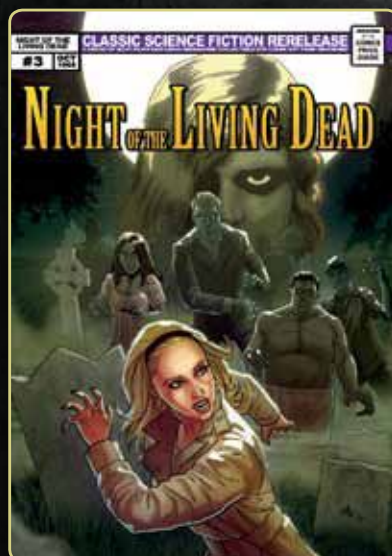
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OLIVE FILMS

(\$29.95 Blu-ray) 11/16

HANNIE CAULDER (1971) ♂♂♂

D: Burt Kennedy. Raquel Welch, Robert Culp, Ernest Borgnine, Strother Martin, Jack Elam, Christopher Lee. 85 mins.

Erstwhile Randolph Scott/Budd Boetticher collaborator Kennedy tackles spaghetti-western tropes in this Spain-lensed oater (vividly photographed by Edward Scaife) designed as a showcase for wannabe action star and credited co-producer Raquel, who'd previously gone the frontier route in **Bandolero!** and **100 Rifles**. Kennedy also penned the screenplay under the alias Z.X. Jones (the spoken odes to "Sonora Town," earlier expressed in the Burt-scripted Boetticher classic **The Tall T**, supply a dead giveaway). Raquel plays way station wife Hannie, who, after her husband's shot down in cold blood, is gang-raped by the alternately deadly and goofy Clemens brothers, portrayed in ornery slapstick style by reliable bad guys Borgnine, Elam and, in full-out **Wild Bunch** mode, Martin. Hannie, surviving a fire set by the villains, swears vengeance against the three, an oath enabled by the unexpected arrival of bounty hunter Thomas Luther Price (an excellent, understated Culp, sans his smarmy **I Spy** moves). Price, of course, repeatedly rejects Hannie's pleas for help, warning her that "Even if you win, you lose" but ultimately accepts the task of training Hannie in the gunslinging arts. In order to lay hands on the ideal revolver, the pair journeys to Mexico for an extended visit with gun-maker Bailey (a relaxed Lee, probably enjoying a working vacation, in his sole western appearance). Our story heats up when Hannie—initially naked but for a loose poncho, then outfitted with super-tight derriere-spotlighting britches—and Price pursue their prey across the border. While less than a classic, **Hannie Caulder** shapes up as one of the better examples of a by then-waning western genre, galloping in at a trim 85 minutes and providing a deft blend of action, ogling, terse romance, drama, character study and dark comedy. (Sharp-eyed viewers will sight a silent, unbilled Stephen Boyd as a mysterious Man in Black, billed in the end credits as The Preacher, who surfaces at key moments.) Olive's sharp widescreen Signature Series Blu-ray special edition comes equipped with a brace of featurettes, the informative **Win or Lose: Tigon Pictures and the Making of Hannie Caulder**, hosted by knowledgeable film historian Christopher Frayling, and the somewhat less gripping

Exploitation or Redemption? with Ben Sher, an audio commentary by filmmaker Alex (**Repo Man**) Cox, and an essay, **Sympathy for Lady Vengeance**, by critic Kim Morgan.

—*The Phantom*

WARNER ARCHIVE

(\$21.99 Blu-ray each) 7/16, 8/16

THE DEADLY TRACKERS (1973)

♂♂1/2

D: Barry Shear, Samuel Fuller (uncredited). Richard Harris, Rod Taylor, Al Lettieri, Neville Band, William Smith, Paul Benjamin, Kelly Jean Peters, Isela Vega. 110 mins.

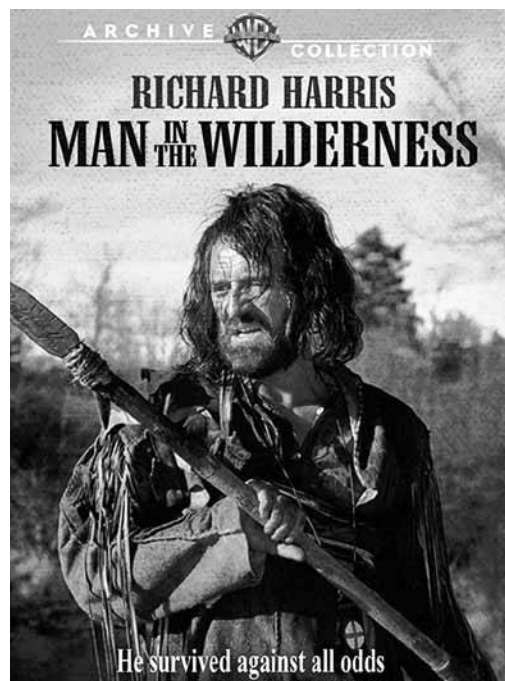
What happens when heartless bank-robbing bandit gang leader wily Frank Brand (Taylor) takes pacifist Sheriff Sean Kilpatrick's (Harris) child hostage, callously throws the boy from horseback and has no cause to remember that the child was trampled? Kilpatrick turns into a killer, but vengeance takes many twists and turns once he crosses into Mexico in pursuit of the truly despicable Brand and collides repeatedly, a la Eastwood and Wallach in **The Good, The Bad and The Ugly**, with the equally committed but more scrupulous Brand-hunting Mexican policeman Gutierrez (Lettieri). The story zigs and zags, with moments of electrifying action or dialogue followed by the humdrum. Because the script was adapted from a Sam Fuller story (**Riata**), Brand's henchmen burst with idiosyncratic traits, offer pointed social commentary, and contribute mightily to the overriding ironic sense of human foible and the tragedy of happenstance. What to make of Choo Choo (Brand), a Wild West Dead End Kid with a hunk of railroad iron for a hand? Schoolboy (Smith) isn't playing with a full deck and diffident, dissed African-American Jacob (Benjamin), the smartest of the gang, is engineered to indict Jim Crow. It's pleasurable watching Kilpatrick stick the knife in, but eventually Kilpatrick's and Gutierrez's dance repeats. Naturally, there's a trip to a whorehouse (women are treated extremely poorly throughout, which, in a less complicated time, means realistically) and, though this is 1870s Mexico, you might imagine Fuller, cigar in hand, distilling wartime experiences. The action when it's good is very, very good. The rest of the time I found myself wanting to like this mini epic, with its lofty ambition and diehard opponents, more. No **South Park**-style lessons-learned wrap-up sweetens the finale. The whole film is worth the surprise, gut-wrenching ending.

—Nancy Naglin

MAN IN THE WILDERNESS (1971)

♂♂♂♂

D: Richard C. Sarafian. Richard Harris, John Huston, Henry Wilcoxon, Percy Herbert, Dennis Waterman, Prunella Ransome, Peggy The Bear. 104 mins.

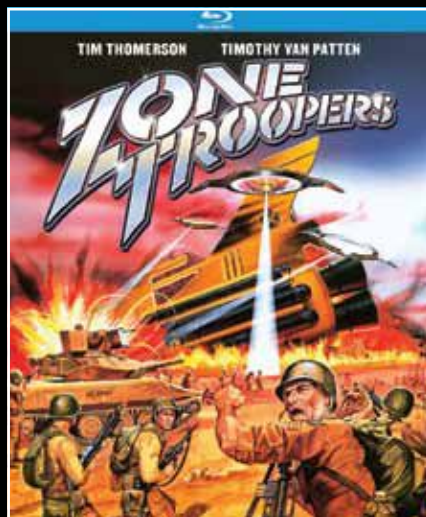
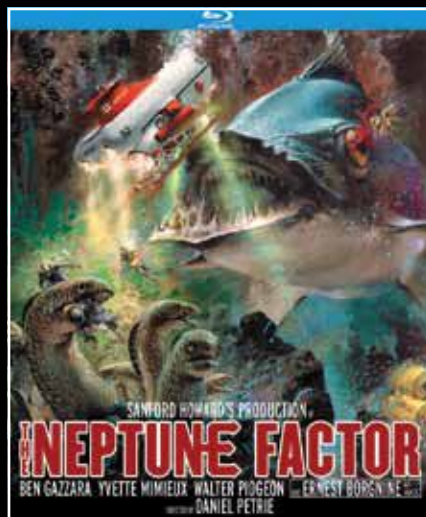
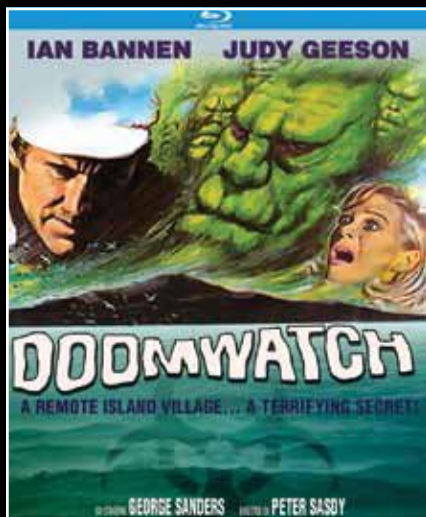


In 1820, Captain Henry (Huston) is fur trapping in the Northwest wilderness, on board a barge pulled by mules looking to reach the Missouri River, when his beloved soulmate and son surrogate, the solo, edgy and enviably competent Zachary Bass (Harris), is mauled by a bear and left to die in the care of the craven Fogarty (Herbert) and the impressionable youngster Lowrie (Waterman). **The Revenant** (VS #99), based on the same historical source, is a paean to survival and vengeance. Lacking the cinematic majesty of **The Revenant**, **Man** takes a different tack, mining a '70s quest for self-awareness and venturing into existential **Moby Dick** territory. Ahab-like Captain Henry becomes increasingly unhinged, obsessing about Bass and imagining sightings, infecting his perpetually restive crew with fear and resentment. Meanwhile, Bass, abandoned and in extremis, gets to observe the nadir of human nature, seeing only the basest of motives in the people, white or Indian, he encounters or avoids. The tinder—symbolic and real—for his fire is his Bible, for Bass spurns God, angrily eschewing the Almighty for having taken his parents and leaving him an unbelieving orphan at the mercy of martinet churchmen. Flashbacks, infused with '70s sensual romanticism, flesh out his marriage and the pregnant wife he left to follow Captain Henry. People and montages float by Bass who, as an outsider and voyeur, achieves a state of disassociated enlightenment wandering, as it were, in the desert. The tipping point for Bass is spiritual when he understands himself, finally, and realizes, seeing an Indian woman give birth, that salvation for him is hearth and home where his child awaits. The mood is eerie, the emotional landscape anticipates the haunting nihilism of Jim Jarmusch's **Dead Man** (VS #22), encounters are unpredictable and, despite Bass's inner journey, the action is satisfyingly frequent, intense and bloody. ♂

—Nancy Naglin

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By Dan Cziraky

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DOCTOR WHO: SERIES EIGHT, PART ONE (2014) ⚡⚡⚡1/2

D: Various. Peter Capaldi, Jenna Coleman, Samuel Anderson, Neve McIntosh. Tom Riley, Matt Smith. 310 mins.

This two-disc set collects the first six episodes of **Series Eight** (2014), introducing Peter Capaldi as the Twelfth Doctor. **Deep Breath** is the post-regeneration episode and sees the Doctor and companion Clara Oswald (Coleman) end up in Victorian London after the TARDIS is swallowed by an enormous Tyrannosaurus Rex. In steps the Paternostira Gang: Silurian warrior Madam Vastra (McIntosh), her human wife Jenny Flint (Catrin Stewart), and the Sontaran warrior/nurse Strax (Dan Starkey). Together, they attempt to tend to both the dinosaur in the Thames River and the regenerated Doctor's erratic behavior. When the dinosaur suddenly is destroyed via spontaneous combustion, and Madame Vastra realizes there have been similar murders reported in the newspapers, the Doctor is back on the case. By the episode's end, the threat of ancient robots cobbling spare parts from humans and hiding their crimes by incinerating the bodies has been thwarted, and the Doctor has settled into his new personality. At first, Clara isn't sure she wants to continue traveling with the Doctor, but she receives a surprise phone call from the Eleventh Doctor (Smith), just prior to his regeneration, urging her to stay by his side. **Into the Dalek** is a lark on **Fantastic Voyage** as the Doctor, Clara, and a team of soldiers are miniaturized and inserted into a battle-damaged Dalek (whom the Doctor nicknames "Rusty") that has turned "good." The Dalek's interior is revealed to be just as deadly as its exterior, though, and when the fault is repaired, the "good" is eradicated—or is it? In **Robot of Sherwood**, the Doctor offers Clara the chance to go anywhere in time and space to meet anyone she wants. She picks Robin Hood, but the Doctor insists he is make-believe. Trying to prove it to her, they travel to Sherwood Forest in 1190 A.D. and instantly encounter the bandit (Riley) in the flesh. The Doctor remains incredulous, doubting everything he sees and hears. Although the story elements from the legends remain the same, the true threat exists not in the Sheriff of Nottingham (Ben Miller) but in an army of robots from the future trying to repair their starship's engines with gold plundered by the Sheriff. Promising Robin the throne of England for his assistance, the Doctor and Clara must rescue Robin from the

gallows in order to save the Earth. Extras on this disc include **Doctor Who Extra** behind-the-scenes episodes, as well as crew commentary on **Into the Dalek** and **Robot of Sherwood**.

Disc 2 contains three more episodes from the series. **Listen** finds the Doctor suddenly obsessed with the idea that if nature has evolved perfect hunters and perfect defenses, why not perfect hiders? Everyone has had the same dream of something hiding under the bed; what if it isn't just a dream? What if such a creature really exists, hiding at the edges of all perception? Fresh from a disastrous date with co-worker Danny Pink (Anderson), Clara agrees to attempt traveling to the night she had the dream by linking with the TARDIS' psychic circuits. However, a phone call from Danny distracts her and they end up in his timeline as a child (Remi Gooding), on the night he has the dream. After encountering *something* hiding under young Pink's bedspread, the Doctor extrapolates Clara's timeline from the residue left in the psychic circuits. He ends up encountering Colonel Orson Pink (Anderson), from 100 years in Clara's future. Col. Pink is an experimenter in time travel but has overshot his target and landed at the End of the Universe. There, the Doctor hopes to finally see his perfect camouflage creature, for at the end of everything, why hide anymore? But not everything is as it seems, and the answers the Doctor seeks are in one location he never dreamed of returning to. **Time Heist** is a bit of an homage to **Ocean's Eleven**, as the Doctor and Clara are recruited by a mysterious character known only as The Architect to participate in the robbery of the Bank of Karabraxos, the most secure bank in the entire universe. Joining them are Psi (Jonathan Bailey), a computer-augmented human, and Saibre (Pippa Bennett-Warner), a shape-shifter. All have had memory wipes to aid them in the robbery, as they encounter the psychic creature The Teller (Ross Milan), which can read minds—as well as devour them. As the heist continues, the Doctor begins to realize everything has been very carefully plotted down to the last detail—from a future perspective. **The Caretaker** sees Clara trying to balance her adventures with the Doctor and her love life with Danny. But the Doctor puts her off as he needs to "do a thing" without her. As it turns out, that "thing" requires going undercover as the new caretaker at Coal Hill School, where both Clara and Danny teach. The Doctor tries to keep Clara out of his activities as much possible, but Danny is instantly suspicious. Eventually, the Doctor tracks the threat to a robotic warrior, a Skovox Blitzer, that has fallen through time to Earth. Trying to capture it by himself, his efforts are ruined when Danny removes several chronodine



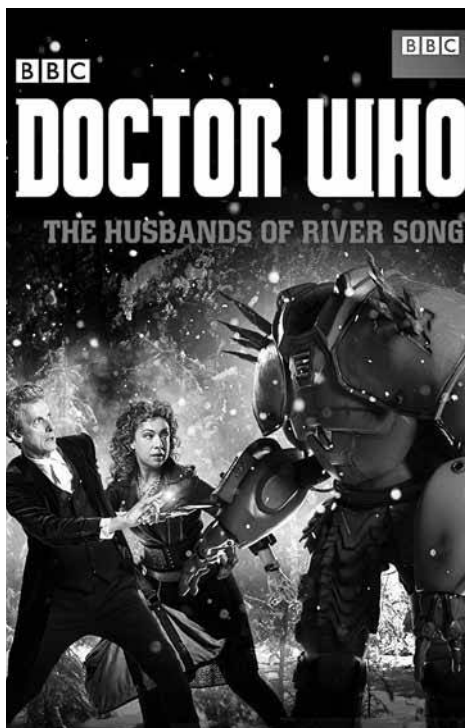
generators he has placed around the school in order to entrap the Blitzer in the Time Vortex. The Doctor manages to send it briefly away, but it should return in 74 hours. Danny is overwhelmed by Clara's admission of her travels with the Doctor, while the Doctor is upset that she has formed a romantic relationship with a former soldier. Meanwhile, the Doctor is discovered by Clara's student Courtney Woods (Ellis George), to whom he takes a shine after learning she is considered a "disruptive influence" by her teachers. Extras on this disc include crew commentary for **The Caretaker** and **Doctor Who Extra** for all three episodes.

This season was a get-acquainted period for the Twelfth Doctor as portrayed by Capaldi. He is an amalgamation of past Doctors, such as William Hartnell's cranky First Doctor and Jon Pertwee's flashy, dashing Third Doctor. Capaldi's Doctor also has a bit of sorrow and detachment to him, as his new series of regenerations, granted to him by the Time Lords in the seventh series Christmas Special **The Time of the Doctor** (2013), are an all-new element to the character. Also introduced in this series is the mysterious Missy (Michelle Gomez), a god-like figure in charge of a seeming afterlife referred to as the Promised Land. This is a season-long arc that continues into the second half of the series. Overall, a fine introduction to the first Doctor with a Scottish accent (although past Scots actors Sylvester McCoy and David Tennant affected British accents for their Doctors). ⚡

DOCTOR WHO: THE HUSBANDS OF RIVER SONG (2015) ⚡⚡⚡

D: Douglas Mackinnon. Peter Capaldi, Alex Kingston, Matt Lucas, Greg Davies, Phillip Rhys. 60 mins. (BBC) 2/16

The annual **Doctor Who** Christmas Special serves to wrap up the end of Season 9. Because of scheduling, it would also be the last original episode for a full year. On Christmas Day on the human colony of Mendorax Delora in 5343 A.D., the Doctor (Capaldi) is mistaken for a surgeon hired by his wife, River Song (Kingston), to attend to her dying "husband," King Hydroflax (Davies). River fails to recognize the Doctor in his current regeneration, which increasingly frustrates him over her flirtations with Hydroflax and several other males. The Halassi Androvar, the most valuable diamond in the universe, was lodged in Hydroflax's brain during his bloody raid on the Halassi vaults. River wants "the surgeon" to remove his entire head, killing the monstrous king. However, Hydroflax is a cyborg, his head easily detachable from his robotic body. Having overheard their conversation, he declares River a traitor and orders her execution. The Doctor and River escape with the king's detached head, thanks to the aid of Ramone (Rhys)—yet another of her husbands. Believing her servant Nardole (Lucas) to have information, the king's body (which operates independently) decapitates him to use his head to track her. River reveals she purposely crashed Hydroflax's ship in their precise location, knowing the Doctor would be in the area with his TARDIS. Unaware of his recent regeneration, Ramone has only been able to find the TARDIS. River decides to steal it instead, which she has done before without the Doctor's knowledge (until now). The TARDIS' safeguards prevent it from taking off when it detects that Hydroflax's head and body, although separated, are still linked to each other, making the head and body both inside and outside the TARDIS. Hydroflax's body tracks Ramone, taking his head, too. A homing beacon inside Hydroflax's head activates and, using Ramone, the body forces its way inside. The TARDIS is then able to travel to the coordinates River had set: the starship Harmony and Redemption. This is where River is meeting her buyer for the diamond. She requests that the Maître d', Flemming (Rowan Polonski), seal the baggage hold, so that Hydroflax's body remains locked inside. River and the Doctor meet with the buyer for the diamond, Scratch (Robert Curtis), who has secretly filled the dining room with members of his own species. After receiving payment, Scratch and his compatriots reveal that they worship King Hydroflax and sought to recover the diamond in his honor. Stalling for time rather than reveal they have the diamond inside Hydroflax's detached head, they are betrayed by Flemming, who was tricked by Ramone into



unsealing the baggage compartment. Flemming interrogates River re the whereabouts of the Doctor and deduces that he will always come to rescue the woman he loves. River scoffs at the idea, admitting that while she loves the Doctor, they are mistaken in thinking that he loves her back. She notices the steady gaze and mild smirk on the Doctor's face and finally realizes he has been with her all along. But, being a time traveler, the odds are always in River's favor. What she had not counted on was their journey taking them to the Singing Towers of Darillium, where legend has it she spends her last night with the Doctor.

After the dramatically heavy season-ending episodes **Heaven Sent** and **Hell Bent**, the lighter tone of **The Husbands of River Song** is quite welcome. River hadn't been seen since 2013's **The Name of the Doctor**, which had been presumed to be her final appearance in the series. So this was a nice way of giving the character a proper send-off (if, indeed, it is her final story—you never know with time travel). Kingston is in excellent form and plays up River's bad girl persona perfectly. Capaldi is an interesting match for her, cranky and then enjoying the romp, and always surprised at River's behavior when she doesn't know who the Doctor is. Davies has a nice turn as the blustery King Hydroflax, while Lucas is a hoot as the long-suffering Nardole. (In fact, he was so impressive, the character is being brought back for Series 10 in 2017.) With only a 2016 Christmas Special airing this year, we will have a lot of catching up to do when the series returns. Extras include **The Adventures of River Song**, a six-month exploration of the character's history on the series, and **Doctor Who Extra**, a look at the making of the special. **The Husbands of River Song** is also included on the multi-disc set **Doctor Who: The Complete Ninth Series** (4/16). ⚡

THE TRUTH FROM THE BOOTH Confessions of a Film Projectionist By Tim Ferrante

UNKIND CUTS!

Prior to becoming a projectionist, I worked as a drive-in theatre fieldman. On my first night, the manager said, "Go around and turn off all of the speakers not in use." We could clearly hear the movie's audio emanating from the unused speakers. "When you're done, I don't want to hear a sound," he warned. In the far-flung reaches of the lot most speakers were dead and dangling from their stanchions. But I could still faintly hear the movie leaking from patrons' windows. That was as silent as this place was going to get, Mr. Manager. So there.

I didn't enjoy being a fieldman. I wanted to be a projectionist anyway. And later on when I was officially brought into the projectionists' union fold, I told the business agent I wanted to learn the drive-in booth. "The drive-in? Wait on that one. You can go learn it, but you'll probably never be called to work it." The drive-in paid pretty well and had its regular projectionist and his relief person all sewn up. If there was a sudden need one night, union members with greater seniority would have jumped in long before me.

It had another lucrative (and secret) allure. The regular projectionist received an extra "\$5 per cut" fee. A per cut fee? I'll explain. The rear of the lot had a typical stockade fence that bordered the backyard of several homes. Nevertheless, residents could still see the screen. As movie content became more exploitative and the rating system was enacted, some homeowners with children started to complain about movie nudity. So instead of building a higher fence to block the screen, the theatre chain mandated that the nudity be cut out of the prints! So the union negotiated a \$5 per cut fee. When prints were delivered, the projectionist wound the film through a large viewer. When he saw blatant T&A, he'd cut those frames or scenes out. For each one he removed—*cha-ching*—he'd get "\$5 per cut"! He'd splice them back in when the booking was over.

I heeded the business agent's advice and didn't train at the drive-in. That \$5 per cut fee? The practice went on for years. Patrons apparently didn't notice or care about the missing nipples. I still wonder how many high fences could have been built with all those \$5 per cut fees. ⚡

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Scott Voisin's CHARACTER KINGS ROBERT COSTANZO

Specializing in earthy cop, colorful criminal and comic working-class roles, veteran thesp

Robert Costanzo splits his time between copious TV shows (**Glory Days**, **NYPD Blue**), voice-over work (**Batman: The Animated Movie**), and both indie and mainstream movies, from **Total Recall** and **Die Hard 2** to his iconic cameo in **City Slickers**.

Scott Voisin recently caught up with the busy actor for the following conversation.

SCOTT VOISIN How did you get your start in acting?

ROBERT COSTANZO It was kind of curious how it all came about. I was a business major at St. Francis College, and when I got out of school, I went to work in the textile industry. There was an event with some of the sales people where I went quail hunting—it was either quail hunting or golf, and while I'm now an avid golfer, back then I had never played—so I chose hunting. I couldn't shoot quail out of the air, and the sales people made fun of me. I was a good sport about it but then I turned it around and started roasting the execs and sales people, and I guess I was funnier than they were. I ended up sharing a limo with the company's chairman of the board, Robert Levinson, and he said to me, "Costanzo, you're very funny. Have you ever thought about show business?" I said, "I guess you've seen my sales figures, Mr. Levinson." A couple of days later, I went over to the Lee Strasberg Theatre Institute and enrolled in a class. It was pretty cool because women who wouldn't even look at me were now saying, "Come over to my loft and we'll rehearse." I thought, "This ain't bad, this ain't bad." I was an Italian kid from Brooklyn in my late twenties and it seemed like the thing to do. It just felt right, like it was my path. I quit the business world and started taking classes and doing plays. I was always the raconteur, comedian and storyteller of my crew growing up, so this was a natural extension of that.

SV From the late '70s throughout the '80s and '90s, you seemed to be making appearances on all of the hit TV shows. At what point were you confident that you could make a living as an actor?

RC I never asked myself that question, but it just sort of became apparent to me that I could do it. I was in New York bartending and doing some commercials and eventually got cast in the sitcom **Alice**, so I went to Hollywood. I wasn't sure if I would stay, but I did a few days on a movie called **Blood-brothers** with Richard Gere, Paul Sorvino

and Tony Lo Bianco. I kind of got off the ground running with those jobs and I decided to stay and see what would happen. I then got work on sitcoms like **Rhoda** and **The Bob Newhart Show** and **Barney Miller**, so that's how it all started. I'm a working actor and I've worked a lot, but I've not worked nearly as much as I used to. Who knows why? I did a number of little independent films—most of which went nowhere—and I made some guest appearances on TV. The last big shot I had was a pilot with Rhea Perlman, Kirstie Alley and Michael Rispoli called **The Manzanis**. It was very well-written by Marco Pennette and I was surprised it didn't get picked up, but it seems like unless sitcoms today have transvestites, vampires or lesbians, the networks aren't interested. I thought it could've been a very good show, but we'll never know.

SV How did you get involved with Paul Verhoevan's **Total Recall**?

RC I went in for an audition, I met Paul Verhoevan, we talked about the role and I got cast. He's a good director. Sometimes I had a little trouble communicating with him, but he knew what he wanted to do and it turned out fine. I think the movie is certainly better than the remake they did, and many people consider our version to be brilliant. It was fun to do and Schwarzenegger and I got along pretty well.

SV What was it like working on **Dick Tracy**?

RC That was fun because you got to see the inner workings of the mind of Warren Beatty. To me, he's a brilliant director, even though he hasn't done that many things. It was so fascinating to watch the way he worked. I ended up making extra money on that because I only really worked one or two days, but I would get called to the set and then get sent home without doing anything. No one saw the script, and you never knew what Beatty wanted to do or when he was going to do it. It was fun just hanging around and finally getting to do my scene, but it was great to watch him work. I'm sure he knew what he wanted, but he was also kind of creating on the spot.

SV Were you grateful or disappointed that your character wasn't buried under a ton of makeup?

RC I was grateful because nobody likes doing that. My friend Ron Perlman seems to do everything in prosthetics and I know it can be tedious and frustrating at times. I can't remember many parts where I had to do that, but I was happy I didn't have to go through it.

SV One of the biggest films on your resume is **Die Hard 2**.

RC Talk about a cash cow—I'm still getting decent residuals from that! I was doing a series with a then-unknown Brad Pitt in Canada called **Glory Days**, which was sort of a rite-of-passage show about high school graduates, and I played the police chief. I was filming that in Vancouver



Character king Robert Costanzo ready for action.

and at the same time, I was flying back to do **Die Hard 2** in Colorado. They were having trouble finding a good location with snow. Obviously they could make snow—and that's what they wound up doing—but they moved around to a couple of different locations looking for the real thing. I remember being exhausted constantly flying from Canada to Colorado and back again. It was like, "What coast am I on and what movie am I doing?" It was crazy. Bruce Willis was a nice guy and cool to work with. I remember the Super Bowl was playing while we were filming. He and Demi Moore—who were married at the time—both won the football pool, but I'm pretty sure they didn't keep the money.

SV **City Slickers** is one of the movies you're probably best known for, with your great scene in the kids' classroom.

RC That scene has probably brought me more notoriety than anything else. It's almost like a cult thing. I remember hearing from a fraternity at a small college in upstate New York, and they told me that they had my monologue on their answering machine. Lowell Ganz and Babaloo Mandel were the writers, and those guys were brilliant. **City Slickers** was a joy and it's something I'm remembered for. One night I was with a friend and we were rushing to get to a theater in New York. It was almost eight at night and we couldn't get a taxi and all of a sudden this cab does a crazy U-turn, pulls up in front of us and a guy in the passenger seat rolls down the window and says, "Get in, Mr. Costanzo." It turned out these guys were cops and were in an undercover car disguised as a cab. One of them asked me, "Where can we take you?" I said, "I've got to get to the theater." He said, "We'll get you there in time. Can you do me a favor? My partner's off work tonight, but can you do your speech from **City Slickers** for him?" This cop got his partner on the phone, and as best I could, I did that monologue. That was fun.

“As actors, you root for your friends but sometimes it’s a natural feeling to say, ‘Why not me?’”

Robert Costanzo

When I played Giardella in the first seven episodes of **NYPD Blue**, the New York cops were great to me. They’d say, “Hey Bobby, park here,” and I’d get a little special treatment. One time, I was doing this low-budget independent film and a driver picked me up in Brooklyn. We were going through the Battery Tunnel and the kid that was driving me didn’t have an E-Z Pass to get through. There was a lot of traffic and we had to change lanes and a cop pulled us over. I told the driver, “Don’t worry, kid, these cops love me.” I rolled down the window and said, “Hello, officer, I’m Bobby Costanzo from **NYPD Blue**. We’re going to do a movie and the mayor is trying to encourage filmmaking in the city. The young man didn’t have an E-Z Pass, so I thought we’d change lanes.” The cop starts writing out a ticket and I’m like, “But I’m Costanzo... Bobby Costanzo from **NYPD Blue**.” The cop hands the driver the ticket and says, “Tell him I never liked his work.” So, you win some and you lose some.

*SV You also worked with Billy Crystal on **Forget Paris** and **61***.*

RC Billy developed that role for me in **Forget Paris**. On the page it was a very small part, but we made it into something good. **61*** was a TV movie with Thomas Jane and Barry Pepper, and that was fun. I thought I was gonna work with Billy again in **Analyze This**; I was supposed to have the role of Jelly. Billy was championing me for that part, and Harold Ramis, the director, wanted me to do it, but Robert De Niro liked Joe Viterelli. Joe was great and, God rest his soul, brought a whole different dynamic to the role. Billy has been a great friend and has tried to include me as much as he could and I’ve always enjoyed working with him.

*SV I think one of the most underrated movies you’ve done is **With Friends Like These...***

RC Thank you! How that movie never got out there is still a mystery to us, including my friend Phil Messina, the director and writer who wrote that part with me in mind. I’m not sure what happened there. I think the lawyers got into some weird stuff with other lawyers, and the movie never got its just due. John Travolta told me he liked that movie better than **Get Shorty** in terms of how Hollywood was shown; he thought it was a fresh look at the business.

SV I thought the premise was great, where friendship and loyalty are put to the test when a big opportunity comes up. Have you experienced anything like that in real life?

RC Oh, sure. As actors, you root for your friends but sometimes it’s a natural feeling to say, “Why not me?” There’s always some jealousy, I think. Unless you’re awfully well-adjusted—which maybe one out of every 100 actors are—that’s a natural human emotion. You just have to try and suppress it. I always feel like if I’m not gonna get a role, it’s better that a friend should get it. That’s how I feel, but I’m not gonna lie, sometimes I think, “Man, I can’t believe they gave it to him!”

SV What was it like working with such an incredible cast?

RC David Strathairn is an actor’s actor, and he was great. He’s so brilliant and he’s so modest. I had a wonderful time with Jon Tenney and Adam Arkin, and Amy Madigan—oh my God, I love that woman! She’s like a rock. My sons were little at the time and were extras in the movie and Elle Macpherson told them, “Your Dad’s a remarkably sexy man.” They thought I was just some old bald guy, so to have a world-class model tell my kids that was pretty cool! Penny Marshall, who produced the movie, was around and she was great. Bill Murray was a joy to work with, but Martin Scorsese’s stuff involved some movie magic. His bit was shot in New York but the rest of us weren’t there, so we had extras fill in for us on the wider shots. My Dad used to travel with me a lot and he even did a little acting. In some IMDb circles, I’m known as “the son of Carmine.” He came out to California after my mother passed away and he stayed with us for a while until he got his own place. He had a private sanitation business and had never done any acting, but he wound up doing a commercial or two and was in **With Friends Like These...** My father played my father, so that was a pretty cool part of my life having Dad working with me. It was a lot of fun making the film and I liked being the lead guy.

SV When I interviewed Jon Polito, he told me that you asked him to do a cameo in the film as his rival because you were rivals in real life.

RC That’s true. Jon’s a wonderful guy, and I cannot tell you how many times I get mistaken for him. It’s incredible how many people confuse us for each other. Jon was so gracious, and I think he even worked for scale. We were working on the scene and the director, Phil Messina, said, “I want to do a close-up of you and Costanzo together because people mix you guys up a lot. Would you mind shaving your moustache?” That moustache was Polito’s trademark, and he said, “Oh, sure—I shave my moustache and I work for scale. Do you want me to cater this thing, too?” But he did it, and he was such a terrific guy. He and I would go after a lot of the same roles and every now and then when I hear he landed something, I’ll say, “How come Polito



Robert Costanzo in **With Friends Like These...**

got that and I never even got asked?” As a matter of fact he recommended me for the movie **Judy Moody and the Not Bummer Summer**, and they hired me based on his recommendation. I guess they were in a pinch and they needed somebody in a hurry, so they went to me, “Polito, Jr.”

*SV You directed, co-wrote and co-produced a short film called **Can Frankie Come Out?** Can you tell me the circumstances behind that?*

RC About ten years ago, I met a guy named Steve Fix at an acting workshop that I occasionally teach at. He had some cash and he wanted to produce the John Patrick Shanley play **Italian American Reconciliation**, which reminded Steve of his relationship with his father. We did the play, he hired me to direct it, and Steve and I have been friends ever since. I directed a couple of other little plays after that and then Steve’s manager put up the money to do **Can Frankie Come Out?** He and I wrote the script and my son Chris played a waiter. Carmine Caridi—who’s a pretty well-known actor—agreed to be in it, and Steve played Frankie. Later on we did a sequel to it and they both played at various film festivals and were shown online. I worked on a really good movie called **Do You Wanna Dance?** and I met James Saltouros, who was an attorney in Chicago and a part-time actor. Jimmy and I also did an episode of **Early Edition** together and we became great friends. He started the Emergent Theatre Company and for the last several years I usually do a play there, sometimes as an actor, sometimes as a director.

SV Speaking of which, you’ve worked with several directors who are also actors. Is it helpful to you when the director has experience in front of the camera?

“Based on my looks, I rarely get to play anybody with a shred of intelligence, it seems.”

Robert Costanzo

RC Yeah, I think they understand the process an actor has to go through and they're usually much more cognizant of what it takes to put a performance together. That makes me feel more comfortable, but having said that, there are a couple of actors/directors who surprised me in that they were very dictatorial and very abrupt. I have pretty good instincts and come to the table knowing what I want to do, but I'm always open to something different and I defer to the director. Somewhere in the middle of doing what you want and doing what the director wants, you hopefully get the best results, but some directors want to control every little movement you do and stifle the shit out of you. To be honest, I was like that when I first started directing! I was incredibly overbearing and controlling, and I had to learn to let the actors breathe a little. I think part of it is that you want to show people you know what you're doing and you're in good hands, but ultimately you've got to let the people work. A good director will lead an actor to where the director wants to go, but he'll let the actor think he's the one doing the leading.

SV What frustrates you the most about the business side of acting?

RC The fact that it is a business. There are so many clichéd excuses you're given for why you don't get a role, like “You're too on the money.” What does *that* mean? It's been my great fortune and my great disappointment that because of how I look and how I'm perceived, I'm sort of pigeonholed by the industry in general. Perhaps I had a lot to do with that because I took the roles that sort of accommodated me, but people who know me know I'm much more intelligent than the characters I play and I have much more range that I'm rarely able to show. Unfortunately, it's probably a little late in the game for me to change that now. As I've told many agents, “I wouldn't send me in for the role of Baryshnikov, but you can generally send me in for almost anything and I won't make a fool out of you.” Based on my looks, I rarely get to play anybody with a shred of intelligence, it seems. I think I brought a lot of humanity to some of the roles and a lot of warmth and hopefully some gravitas, but in general, I don't get a shot at playing a lawyer or a senator. I remember I was filming something in Canada when my agent called and said, “Bobby, you've arrived! I got a breakdown today on a TV show that said they're



looking for a Danny DeVito, Peter Boyle or Bobby Costanzo type. This is perfect for you.” I said, “Here's the thing. They wouldn't dare ask Danny to do it, Peter would turn it down and if I wanted to do it, they'd say, ‘Bobby's too on the money.’” I told my agent to go ahead and pursue it and he came back and said, “They thought you were too on the money!” I can't explain what goes through people's heads, but I guess it is what it is.

SV What advice would you give to aspiring actors?

RC Take over your father's business! Seriously, though, you've got to really love it and you've got to really want to do it. There are people who get lucky and hit with something right away, but I think in the long run, the talent wins out. If you want to do it just to make money or see yourself on TMZ, that could happen, but if you're serious about it, you've got to go to work. It's not rocket science but it is a craft. There are some people I know who never made it and it's no big surprise why, but having said that, there are a few actors I know who are brilliant but nobody will ever see them because they couldn't handle the rejection and just gave up. Be persistent, and if you really want to do it, do it because there's a need in you to express yourself through acting. ✂



Tim Ferrante's CULT CORNER

CARNIVAL MAGIC (1982) ✂✂1/2

D: Al Adamson. Don Stewart, Regina Carrol, Jennifer Houlton, Howard Segal, Joe Cirillo, Mark Weston. 85 mins. (Film Chest/HD Cinema Classics, \$19.99 2-disc Blu-ray + DVD Combo Pack)

Carnival Magic is director Al Adamson's second-to-last feature film. It's unaffiliated with his own studio, Independent-International Pictures. Planned—and ultimately marketed—as a children's movie, its kiddie attraction is limited to a talking chimp's antics and his magician owner's conjuring routines. The rest? Not so much. Don Stewart portrays Markov the Magnificent, a prestidigitation master and mentalist whose act becomes a failing carnival's savior when he introduces Alexander the Great, his talking (!) primate companion. Markov's jealous rival, sexist animal trainer Kirk (Cirillo), isn't willing to share the spotlight and aids in kidnapping Alex for a vivisection-crazed medical scientist. With wayward subplots aplenty, mayhem prevails with a misogynistic menace, midway mirth and a flowering romance betwixt carny tomboy Ellen (Houlton) and marketing manager David (Segal). Shot in the summer of 1980 with interiors filmed at Earl Owensby Studios in Shelby, NC, and carnival scenes in Gaffney, SC, the movie received spotty theatrical playdates, with Chris Poggiali's Temple of Schlock blog documenting its New York City multi-screen preem in November 1983. Later on, it was falsely reported that the only existing print belonged to Adamson, but film elements and release prints were rescued in 2008 by film detective Phil Hopkins, who noted “they were just days away from going into a dumpster.” Some may deem this Blu-ray restoration as overkill for such a marginal movie, but **Magic** has a...well, *magic* about it. It's ridiculously endearing. You *do* empathize with Alex's plight and Markov's loss. Kirk is a jerk and we root for his comeuppance. It's all perpetrated in a tacky movie way that showcases Adamson's unique dash. His wife, Regina Carrol in her last film role, plays Markov's stage assistant. She was cast just 48 hours prior to filming when the original actress bailed. Her unintended presence provides added value for cult-film fans. Stewart later costarred alongside Sandra Dee in Adamson's last completed feature, American National Enterprises' **Lost** (1983). His final directorial work was in 1993 for Independent-International's unfinished UFO docu-drama **Beyond This Earth** on which yours truly acted as associate producer. Bonus material includes a commentary track with producer Elvin Feltner (who died in 2013) and Vinegar Syndrome's Joe Rubin, an on-camera Feltner interview, a before and after restoration demo, outtakes, theatrical trailer and TV spot. ✂

REMEMBERING CHARACTER KING JON POLITO

By Scott Voisin

Jon Polito came into my life in the Fall of 2013. As a fan of **Miller's Crossing**, **Barton Fink**, **The Crow** and countless other films and TV shows in which he appeared, I thought he was an obvious choice to be part of my **Character Kings** series. His pear-shaped figure, trademark moustache and gravelly voice made him instantly recognizable to audiences regardless of whatever gangster, lowlife or oddball he was portraying. A natural storyteller, Polito was an interviewer's dream! There was never a struggle to get answers to the questions I posed, and the entertaining anecdotes about his unpredictable, rollercoaster life as an actor flowed freely. As interesting as those tales were, they were also imbued with the kind of wisdom and insight that could only be gained from over four decades of experience.

Less than a year later, on Sept. 11, 2014, I met Jon in person when he appeared for my book signing at Dark Delicacies in Burbank, CA. We sat next to each other, and it was wonderful to watch his interaction with the fans. One young man presented Jon with a copy of my first **Character Kings** book. Jon gave him a confused look and gruffly said, "I can't sign this, I'm not in this one. Why don't you buy the second book?" The kid was caught off guard and looked nervous. "Well, I'm a college student and I can't really afford it," he said. Jon rolled his eyes and feigned exasperation but he put pen to paper, finally letting the guy off the hook with a mischievous grin.

It was a fantastic event, and Jon sent me an e-mail the next day telling me how much fun he had. I thanked him for his participation and figured that would be the last I heard from Mr. Polito, but two days later, I received another e-mail from him. He said that he was considering writing his memoirs and wanted to know if I would be interested in helping him. My God, I couldn't type the word "Yes" fast enough!

A phone conversation soon followed, in which he explained he had been diagnosed with multiple myeloma—an incurable type of cancer—in 2010. Although the disease was being managed with an aggressive combination of chemo, steroids and even a stem cell transplant, Jon said he felt the time had come to quit thinking about documenting his life's journey and actually do it. Over the next 18 months, he and I would speak once or twice a week by phone, occasionally tak-

ing time off whenever work or medical treatments intervened.

Our discussions ran the emotional gamut. He talked with great pride about his work with the Coen Brothers ("They don't pay much, but you work more for the art than the money") and admitted to being frustrated with how the industry perceived him ("I wish Hollywood would have recognized all of my variations, but people think they have me pegged"). He was reduced to tears recalling the death of his beloved mother, and he spoke with absolute joy about finding love with his longtime partner, Darryl Armbruster. Unlike many showbiz autobiographies, Jon candidly described how his private demons—a decades-long addiction to cocaine, excessive drinking and out-of-control gambling—took a toll on his personal and professional life. During this writing process, I was afforded the privilege to see beyond the image Jon projected on the screen and get to know him as a human being. With the first draft finished this past August, we talked about my coming to L.A. to work on the editing with him.

Instead, I ended up going there to tell him goodbye.

Jon passed away on September 1, 2016, losing his lengthy, courageous fight against cancer. His spouse, Darryl, invited me to attend Jon's memorial service in the Theatre Arts building at L.A. Community College (since he had come of age in the theater, it was deemed appropriate that Jon should be remembered in a theater). It was the perfect venue to honor a man whose presence and personality were larger than life and played to the back of the house. Several people took to the stage and shared their stories about Jon, including Ethan Coen, Ed Begley Jr., Marcia Gay Harden, Derek Cecil and David J. Burke. Their recollections were hilarious and mostly R-rated. This was not a solemn, reverent memorial; these were stories of a man told as wildly as they were lived. At times, it was more of a roast than a farewell, but that was by design. When these people spoke of Jon, they did so with a laugh and a smile. Grief had been checked at the door.

They say that things happen for a reason. I can't explain it, but what started as a simple interview eventually culminated in Jon entrusting me to help tell his life's journey. Along the way we developed a friendship that I will cherish forever and, although I miss him dearly, I take comfort in knowing I will be able to complete his story and let audiences get to know him as well as I did.

Farewell, Mr. Polito. You may be gone, but you will never be forgotten. ✂



Late, great character king Jon Polito with author Scott Voisin.

Jon Polito's Greatest Hits!

Some of Character King Jon Polito's most memorable roles include:

- Thomas "Three Finger Brown" Lucchese
The Gangster Chronicles (1981)
(n.i.d.)
El Gato
- Miami Vice** (1988)
(Mill Creek Entertainment)
Phil Bartoli
- Crime Story** (1986-87)
(Image Entertainment)
Johnny Casper
- Miller's Crossing** (1990)
(20th Century Fox)
Lou Breeze
- Barton Fink** (1991)
(20th Century Fox)
Steve Crosetti
- Homicide** (1993-94)
(A&E Home Video)
Gideon
- The Crow** (1994)
(Lionsgate)
Louie
- Dream On** (1995-96)
(Universal Studios)
Da Fino
- The Big Lebowski** (1998)
(Universal Studios)
Donald Stern
- The Chronicle** (2001-2)
(n.i.d.)
Enrico Banducci
- Big Eyes** (2014)
(Anchor Bay Entertainment)



SPLIT SCREEN

Axes and Picks with VS Crix
Tim Ferrante & Scott Voisin

Split Screen continues last issue's format with another special challenge match between our cranky crix, who each select a film for the other to view. This go-round takes place in a cinematic courtroom, and first up is the matter of Ferrante v. **Primal Fear** (1996), the Richard Gere starrer, directed by Gregory Hoblit, about an attorney struggling to defend his client in what appears to be an open-and-shut case. Also on the docket: Voisin v. **12 Angry Men** (1957), wherein a dozen ordinary citizens are tasked with deciding the fate of a young man accused of murder. Will both films be acquitted, or will the arguments result in a hung jury?

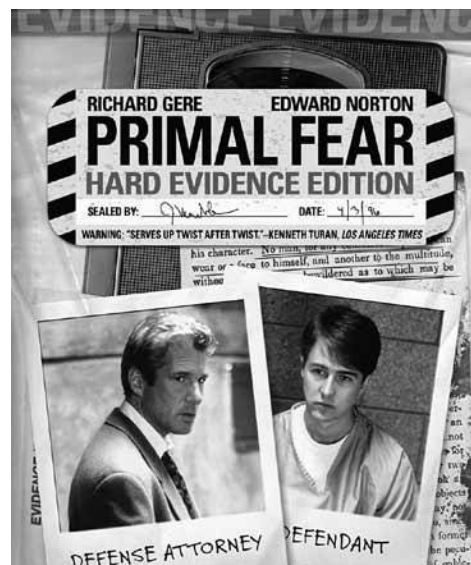
Tim Ferrante: Scott, we compare notes on two courtroom dramas that test the foundation of jurisprudence. You chose for me **Primal Fear**, a movie you believe is a notable example of the genre, perhaps as much I do with director Sidney Lumet's brilliant **12 Angry Men**. Based on William Diehl's best-selling novel, **Fear** drops us into Chicago's slag pit of corruption. Edward Norton portrays Aaron Stampler, a timid altar boy in Archbishop Rushman's church. The blood-drenched Aaron is apprehended upon the discovery of Rushman's carved-up corpse. He says he didn't do it, so big-shot lawyer Martin Vail (Gere) lobbies to defend him. It's a high-profile case, and Vail wants the spotlight amid political crooks, a perverse pastor, a defiant mobster, a psycho killer, and Vail's ex-lover, who's the prosecuting attorney. While I've never read the novel, I trust it's the page-turner critics proclaim. The movie is another matter: a tedious 130-minute journey slowed by needless subplots that severely diminish the gobsmack climax. When I finally got there, I was just glad it was over.

Scott Voisin: Objection! My God, Tim, how can a man as old as you have the attention span of a toddler? Those "needless" subplots are layers that add crucial depth to the overall narrative. The dramatic tension is heightened because of the conflicting agendas of the supporting characters, and their actions directly influence the way Vail proceeds with the case. You could argue that a leaner through-line would result in a superior film, but that's an argument even more worthless than your misguided opinion. I mean, if you want to deal in hypotheticals, why not debate what the movie would be like if it were written and directed by Quentin Tarantino? What if Kevin Hart played Vail? What if the character of Aaron Stampler was a CGI koala bear voiced by Christopher Walken? We could go on and on, but let's stick to the facts as they actually exist.



TF: You suggest **Primal**'s subplots are the successful ingredients for narrative depth and dramatic tension. *The movie is too damn long, old son!* The only tension I felt was my toddler attention span being tested. There are at least two subplots that can be removed. Gone. We'd never miss them. They could have been handled as dialogue instead of wayward scenes that hobble the momentum. **12 Angry Men**...did you like it? Twelve jurors in a room, deciding the fate of an impoverished 18-year-old accused of stabbing his father to death. Henry Fonda portrays "Juror #8," the solitary "not guilty" facing down 11 men who are quick to vote "guilty." Its script, direction, editing, cinematography and performances are of the highest creative caliber. Every cinematic aspect can be individually studied as a movie-making how-to instructional. Every. Single. One. And you don't realize it until it's over because you're too absorbed by #8's steadfast and logical arguments. Its gripping characterization of human beings is an unending emotional tumble-sault. So you watch it again and again and *react* and *react*.

SV: Oh, **Men** is a great movie, no doubt, and I can see why you're so enamored with it: The running time is a senior-friendly 96 minutes; it takes place in one location, so as not to confuse you when people are inside *and* outside; the characters have no difficult names to keep track of; and the case is easier to follow than the one on last night's **Matlock** rerun. I agree that first-time feature helmer Lumet hit the ground running, especially when it came to shot composition. As the discussion and debate drag on, there are moments when it looks like the walls are closing in on the jurors (and the audience), adding an uncomfortable claustrophobic element to the proceedings. What I found most interesting, however, was that writer Reginald Rose's script is concerned not with the boy's ultimate guilt or innocence but the notion of "reasonable doubt" during the deliberation. It's a refreshing change from most Hollywood productions that are strictly concerned with black and white outcomes to crimes awash in grays.



TF: **Men** features Juror #3 played by Lee J. Cobb. He's a holdout—a firm believer in the defendant's guilt. In a highly dramatic moment, this lone voice has a cathartic breakdown that's driven by a secret lifelong struggle. While he spews, rants and justifies his position, he's unwittingly laying bare the real reason he's hell-bent on a guilty vote. I get goosebumps every time I see it. We're also treated to long takes that showcase the professionalism of both actors and crew nailing their marks and cues. An example is the bathroom sequence when characters come and go as Juror #8 chats with them. Jack Warden even risks blowing the scene by performing a cigarette flip move. No cutaways...just excellence. **Fear** is an expensive TV movie. It's notable for Edward Norton as murder suspect Aaron Stampler and the surprise ending. You've razed me throughout using our age difference as a crutch because you know that **Men** isn't deserving of any kind of negative criticism. Maybe it's time you had your own Juror #3 breakdown and admit same.

SV: No thanks. Trying to have a logical discussion with you has caused too many breakdowns already. They all end the same way: Me banging my head against a wall and wishing I could have alcohol administered intravenously. While both movies are finely crafted, the fundamental difference between them comes down to intent. Whereas **Men** was conceived as a thought-provoking drama showing how prejudices, preconceived notions and other character flaws weigh on a life-or-death decision, **Fear** is a pure popcorn thriller, taking the audience for a ride. It aims to entertain and succeeds beautifully. Sure, there are a few life lessons one can discern from the film (steering clear of a kinky archbishop involved with sketchy real-estate deals would probably be #1), but even if you choose to look no deeper than the surface, the return on your 130-minute investment is substantial. Norton is amazing and the supporting cast is beyond reproach, but this vehicle is driven by Gere, who gives one of the best performances of his career. And with that, I rest my case. ⚡

Nancy Naglin's ART-HOUSE VIDEO

EMBRACE OF THE SERPENT (2015) B&W 881/2

D: Ciro Guerra. Nilbio Torres, Jan Bijvoet, Antonio Bolivar, Brionne Davis, Yauenku Migue, Nicolas Cancino, Luigi Sciamanna. 125 mins. (Oscilloscope) 6/16

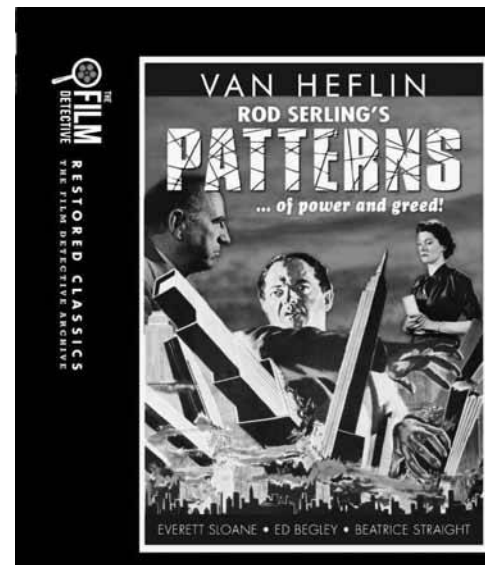
There's something about the South American jungle that deranges. Whites go native, priests go loco and natives go extinct. Christianity and slavery coexist; there's usually a commodity, in this case, rubber, that's driving the madness and another, predictably an hallucinogenic, promising escape. In the modern tale, there's the long-simmering indigenous peoples' revenge for both colonialism and Christianity. **Embrace** has it all, including the towering presence and disdain-for-whites point of view of native shaman Karamakate (Torres as the young K, Bolivar as the elderly K), the sole survivor of his tribe to have escaped extermination at the hands of rubber barons. The plot cuts between two tantalizing expeditions. In 1909, Karamakate guided a German adventurer, the sickly Theodor Koch-Grunberg (Bijvoet), on a quest to find the sacred, disease-curing, dream-giving yakurina plant. Grunberg brings along a docile "civilized" native, Manduca (Migue), he'd freed from rubber-growing slavery, the trio boards canoes, and they promptly descend into darkness. In this contemporary **Heart of Darkness**, the native is in charge and Karamakate, imperious and self-assured, wields the whip, intimidating the weakening Koch-Grunberg and keeping him alive, barely, by blowing a white powder into his nose. Fantastic? The source for the film is factual, based on the diary of Koch-Grunberg, who never made it back alive but whose writing Manduca saved and returned to his family. In 1940, American botanist Richard Evans Schultes (Davis) turns up, Koch-Grunberg's diary in hand, trying to convince a still disdainful but now aged and forgetful Karamakate to take him to the yakurina. **Embrace**, filmed in black-and-white, radiates the gravitas of documentary as right away angst, river dangers, and, most spectacularly, the horror of rubber slavery with an amputee runaway slave begging to be killed assaulting Koch-Grunberg's senses. The **Apocalypto**-style imagery is attention-grabbing but nothing prepares Koch-Grunberg or Schultes for what's around the river bend. They both encounter a Christian mission. In Koch-Grunberg's day, a holier-than-thou priest (Sciamanna) is savagely beating civilization into children. Evans returns to find one of the grown-up children installed as a maniacal Messiah (Cancino) inciting people to suicide. The exquisitely

lensed black-and-white film is garish, louche, disturbing and darkly symbolic. Karamakate's endless feuding with his white charges mimics the war between natives and colonists. His amnesia is a stand-in for people who've lost their culture. Schultes, the hapless white man, winds up alone and enlightened, possibly, but the yakurina, like its people, has been eradicated. Extras include **Visions Behind the Screen**, **History Behind the Scenes**, and **Magic Behind the Scenes**.

GENIUS (2016) 881/2

D: Michael Grandage. Colin Firth, Nicole Kidman, Jude Law, Laura Linney, Dominic West, Guy Pearce, Vanessa Kirby. 104 mins. (Lionsgate) 9/16

In the opening scenes of **Genius**, a completely defeated Thomas Wolfe (Law) is lugging around the gargantuan manuscript of what his all-powerful Scribner's editor, the godly Maxwell Perkins, would shape into Wolfe's enduring debut masterpiece, **Look Homeward Angel** (1929). Wolfe grew up as one of eight children in North Carolina; his father, who died when Wolfe was in college, was a stone-cutter, his mother ran a boardinghouse and, from these thinly disguised events and people, Wolfe wrote a searingly intimate, spiritual, frequently obtuse but soaring autobiography that, whether you understand a word of it or not, leaves you drunk with the power of prose and the desire to write. Initially, Perkins didn't understand the book either but was so uplifted he took Wolfe on as a client and eventually as a surrogate son. Being inspired by great prose is one thing; trying to cinematically simulate the creative process is a slippery slope. **Genius** falters not because of Law's marvelous portrayal of the larger-than-life, loquacious, big-hearted but socially insensitive Wolfe or Firth's adventurously prissy Perkins, not because of their animated, extended arguments in offices, on trains and at Perkins' dining room table about the length and arrangement of words and paragraphs, and certainly not because of the verisimilitude, so crafted it sometimes seems strained, of sets, clothing and jazz clubs. The hole in **Genius** is the puppetry of the characters' interactions as the action proceeds to convince us of Wolfe's genius without mentioning, however briefly, what Wolfe's big books are about or what vision obsessed him. Nonetheless, you won't want to miss the trajectory of Wolfe's tragically short life (he died of brain cancer at age 38; his later masterpiece **You Can't Go Home Again** was published posthumously) and the intensity of the literary party. Wolfe was living tempestuously with his married Jewish muse, Aline Bernstein. Kidman brings the character to life with brittle heartache and bitterness. In counterpoint, we see Law's brilliantly realized Wolfe, ensconced in Perkins' staid Connecticut home, extemporizing like a '30s-style Hunter S. Thompson, regaling Perkins' impressionable young daughters and very conventional wife (Linney). Frequently his own worst enemy, Wolfe insults F. Scott Fitzgerald (Pearce), Hemingway (West) weighs in, thinking the competition is forever Fitzgerald,



and eventually Wolfe, believing his writing has been over-doctored, deserts a heartbroken Perkins, who the film believably shows was also analyst, checkbook, father and friend. Extras include the featurettes **Genesis of Genius** and **Painting a Portrait of the Lost Generation**, plus trailers.

PATTERNS (1956) B&W 8888

D: Fielder Cook. Van Heflin, Everett Sloane, Ed Begley, Beatrice Straight, Elizabeth Wilson, Joanne Roos, Valerie Cossart, Ronnie Welsh. 83 mins. (The Film Detective) 10/16

Adapted from his 1955 teleplay, Rod Serling's mordant script—aided by stellar performances by Heflin, playing ambitious industrial designer Fred Staples, a naïf transplanted from the sticks to enlarge unscrupulous Trump-style Mr. Ramsey's (Sloane) expanding acquisitions, and Begley as older and not well Bill Briggs, who questions the need to so ruthlessly cut jobs—is as timely today as when it epitomized postwar modernization. Of particular interest in this unsparing morality play—as the unrelenting Ramsey corrals his players to sink the nails into Briggs' coffin—is the pre-electronic use of women as human computers: they're this or that one's girl, attached to and traded among men, silent and slaving, doing all the office chores of the laptop. Nancy Staples (Straight) lacks the moral compass of her husband; she really should be Ramsey's hire. Welsh does an outstanding job playing pampered but knowing teenage Paul Briggs, subtly showing the sacrifices of his absentee, widowed dad. Staples is caught in the middle, torn between doing right and wanting to get ahead, wondering if he'll survive—or want to—the evisceration of not only Briggs but his own values and the disappearing values of homespun business. Serling was not only a scriptwriter without peer but a seer. In the end, the bottom line is all that matters, but the bargain Staples strikes with Ramsey, leaving open the way for him to both succeed and annihilate Ramsey, is a forecast of how the workplace is today and a mesmerizing reminder of how it evolved to **The Apprentice**. 8

They Came From The Basement!

By John Seal

THE BLACK WINDMILL (1974) ♂♂♂
D: Don Siegel. Michael Caine, Delphine Seyrig, John Vernon, Donald Pleasence, Janet Suzman, Joseph O'Connor. 106 mins. (MCA Home Video VHS, n.i.d.)

Time for a quiz: can you name a Don Siegel film that's never been released on disc? Now let's increase the level of difficulty: without consulting IMDb's "collaborations" tool, can you name a Don Siegel film *starring Michael Caine* that's still MIA in digital format? If I've stumped you, rest assured that such a beast exists in the form of 1974's **The Black Windmill**, a spy thriller deserving a better fate than a decaying burial plot in the VHS graveyard.

Shot in Britain and France, **The Black Windmill** stars Caine as Major John Tarrant, an MI5 operative employed by drab apparatus-chik Cedric Harper (Pleasence) in the agency's Subversive Warfare Department. Based on the top floor of an auction house, the department has recently acquired some illicit diamonds that it plans to fence in order to fund one of British Intelligence's underhanded projects.

Before the diamonds can be sold, however, Tarrant's young son David (O'Connor) is snatched in a daring daylight kidnapping by brooding baddie McKee (Vernon) and his gorgeous sidekick Ceil (**Daughters of Darkness**'s Seyrig). Adopting the colorless pseudonym Drabble, McKee names his ransom price as the very same stones now in Harper's possession—suggesting that the agency has been penetrated and its secrets compromised. Despite suspecting that his subordinate might have been turned by the other side, Harper briefly plays along with Tarrant's efforts to rescue David. Eventually, though, it becomes clear the price is simply too high, and that at the end of the day national security concerns (or at least, the concerns of Britain's national security establishment) outweigh the life of a single small schoolboy. If Tarrant wants to see his son alive again, he'll need to take matters into his own hands. Game on!

A throwback to Caine's Harry Palmer trilogy (**The Ipcress File**, **Funeral in Berlin**, and **Billion Dollar Brain**), **The Black Windmill** gives the actor another opportunity to play a British secret agent enmeshed in the treacherous world of double and triple-cross. Despite a major first-reel plot flaw (how did McKee know his victim would be where he was, when he was?), Leigh Vance's screenplay (adapted from a novel by Clive Egleton) is



intelligent and well developed, with an amusing reference to Sean Connery adding an unexpectedly droll touch to the otherwise poker-faced proceedings. Tarrant's troubled relationship with estranged wife Alex (Janet Suzman) is well-drawn and sensitively played, whilst Pleasence brings straitlaced tension to his performance as the non-smoking, non-womanizing, and strictly teetotal Harper.

Location photography in London and Paris also provides significant value especially for fans of public transit. There's a great chase scene set aboard the London Underground (culminating in nostalgic shots of Shepherd's Bush tube station) and priceless footage of the old Rams Gate Hoverport, closed since 1987 but once the home base of Britain's civilian hovercraft fleet.

So why has **The Black Windmill** fallen so completely off the radar? I'd guess the film's relative restraint has contributed to its long-term low profile: to be blunt, there's not a lot of exploitable material here. Siegel uncharacteristically keeps the violence to a minimum, and Caine's tendency to overact is kept in check by his character's stiff upper lip. This is neither **Dirty Harry** nor **The Italian Job**—and it certainly isn't **The Swarm**.

MCA Home Video's VHS tape was a decent effort by the standards of the 1980s, but is now long since past retirement age. MCA's print features letterboxed credits, a nice bonus, but one that primarily underscores how great it would be to see the entire film in its correct 2.35:1 aspect ratio. Colors are muted, with browns predominant (which may or may not have been cinematographer Ousama Rawi's intent), while the lively and imaginative score is an excellent example of peak period Roy Budd.

Produced by Universal (which remains maddeningly and strangely reluctant to take economic advantage of the gems lying within its vaults), **The Black Windmill** should be outsourced to a home-video outfit willing to give it a well-deserved digital dust-off. Perhaps Olive Films or Twilight Time would be willing to take up the task? Long shot though it may be, this is a home-video windmill worth tilting at. ♂

Tim Ferrante's SCORING SESSION

Ghastly Italian Soundtracks!
Biblical Epics!
A Little Box of Horrors!

Take cover! It's a "track attack" I tell you! Leading the charge is Death Waltz Recording Co.'s double LP for **The Night Evelyn Came Out of the Grave** (1971) featuring Bruno Nicolai's twisted cues. Previously available on CD via the Digitmovies label in 2005, this vinyl debut sports a deluxe gatefold jacket with 180g colored vinyl (clear blue with white splatter and clear red with red splatter). Speaking of Digitmovies, that outfit unveiled Giuliano Sorgini's lusciously lurid music for **The Return of the Exorcist** (1975). It starred Richard Conte in one of his last roles and sported several titles, including **Exorcist 3 Cries and Shadows** and **The Possessor**, a Wizard Video big box VHS release. Interesting sidebar is that RCA Italy had created an album master intending it as part of its production music library catalogue. The label tapped the unused album tapes and original session recordings. Recommended. Meanwhile, Rome-based Four Flies Records added a fistful of titles to its list of obscure Italian filmmusic vinyl that include **Sortilegio** (1974), Silvano D'Auria's jazz funk and prog rock treatment for the unreleased and now lost horror film. Gratefully, its music survives with 500 copies on 180g vinyl, as do Alessandro Alessandroni's outstanding compositions for Alfonso Brescia's **poliziotteschi Sangue di Sbirro** (1976). The Jack Palance starrer has other titles, but it landed here as **Bloody Avenger** on videocassette via Vidmark Entertainment. We shift attention Stateside for Intrada's massive 6-CD release of Elmer Bernstein's **The Ten Commandments** (1956). The label touts its grandiose edition as "the entire original two and a half hour soundtrack for the first time ever...everything right down to the tiniest tiple, a rare member of the guitar family." Frank K. DeWald authored the 60-page (!) booklet. We bid adieu with a Varese Sarabande CD Club offering that's limited to 1500 units. **Little Box of Horrors** is crammed with 12 CD soundtracks of out-of-print titles, first-timers on CD and two previously unreleased. Bob Cobert's **The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde** (1968) and Marco Beltrami's **Dracula 2000** are the premiering pair. A notable out-of-print title is Brad Fiedel's **The Serpent and the Rainbow**, once an expensive rarity among collectors. Hmm...is that the bottom of the page approaching? *Ciao.* ♂

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REELING BACK DEATH LIVES!

By Nancy Naglin

DEATH TAKES A HOLIDAY (1934) B&W

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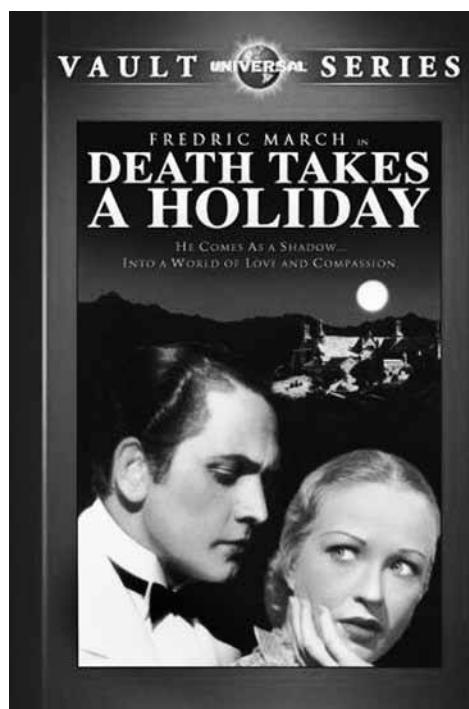
D: Mitchell Leisen. Frederic March, Evelyn Venable, Guy Standing, Katherine Alexander, Gail Patrick, Helen Westley, Kathleen Howard, Kent Taylor, Henry Travers. 79 mins. (Universal Vault Series)

### MEET JOE BLACK (1998) ~~~~~

D: Martin Brest. Brad Pitt, Anthony Hopkins, Claire Forlani, Jake Weber, Marcia Gay Harden, Jeffrey Tambor, Lois Kelly-Miller. 178 mins. (Universal Studios)

Weary of being misunderstood, wondering why men fear him, Death (March) decides to take a three-day holiday, inflicting himself on Duke Lambert's (Standing) unsuspecting, rich vacationers and intruding into the intended marriage plans of the mysteriously disengaged Grazia (Venable) and her solicitous suitor Corrado (Taylor). Based on the Italian play *La Morta In Vacanza* by Alberto Casella, **Death** is a beguiling mixture of whimsy, gravitas and dread, spiked by elderly Baron Cesarea's (Travers) pre-Code references to sexual interests past and present and March's grave but entertaining interpretation of the imperious outsider, disguised to all but the terrified Duke as oddball Prince Sirki, learning to appreciate wine, food, flowers, and, ultimately, love. The dialogue is witty with embedded morbid double entendres; Prince Sirki's secret identity sets the mood and drives the humor of awkward social interactions. In fact, March's deadpan reactions frequently call to mind Bela Lugosi. Meanwhile, there's a constant swirl of chatter, socialites Rhoda (Patrick) and Stephanie (Westley) vie for the Prince's attention; the Duke, who's been warned he'll be dead if he reveals Death's identity, is in very enjoyable extremis; and Death, pursuing the receptive but elusive Grazia, charmingly neglects his real job. But frivolity aside, Prince Sirki talks about death frankly, in a way that is almost *outré* today, especially when he announces his love for Grazia and his intention, as the clock strikes down the last minutes of his last day as a mortal, to take her with him. He is persuaded he must ask Grazia's consent; she not only gives it but claims she has seen Sirki as he really is from the start. Possibly because the dialogue is pre-Code, **Death** is as bewitching, modern, and timely as if it were made today and, in its classy, no-nonsense way, pleasantly stokes end-of-life speculation.

An eternal subject begs for an afterlife. **Meet Joe Black** transforms the original into a lei-



surely, sprawling epic, part morality play, part ethereal love story, with the various parts not necessarily tethered and at times uncertain of their destination. This time the Duke who's in on the secret (and similarly warned to keep his mouth shut) is media mogul William Parrish (Hopkins); he's also the intended victim. But once Death, aka Joe Black (Pitt playing to the hilt a role he covets: the wide-eyed and seemingly stupid nincompoop), shows up, he, too, decides it's time to experience the world and the pleasures of the flesh, starting with peanut butter and ending with carnal knowledge of Parrish's questing doctor daughter, Susan (Forlani). Complicating matters is the fact that Susan believes she has fallen in love with a delightful upbeat clone of this ersatz Joe Black, since this equally imperious and enigmatic Death conveniently killed the man Susan met by chance in order to claim a body. On the precipice of death, life and all its irritating details—as in **Death**, with the Duke's guests hopping in and out of cars, nattering nonstop and burbling about a pending marriage—assail Parrish. He is pestered repeatedly by his other, less favorite daughter, the eager-to-please Allison (Harden), who is consumed with planning a mogul's 65<sup>th</sup> birthday party, and the idiocies of her unctuous husband Quince (the delightfully obsequious Tambor in top two-faced, subversive mode). While Parrish is coming to terms with knowing his life ends at the conclusion of his party, future son-in-law prospect Drew (Weber) connives to sideline Parrish and gain control of the company. Black, a kind of amiable idiot savant with some clever double-entendre lines harkening back to **Death**, insinuates himself into every board meeting and dinner party, even showing up at Susan's hospital to frighten a Jamaican old lady with a ludicrous, groan-inducing display of Pitt-concocted Island dialect. You go with the drift because the characters are appealing, the subject is irresistible, Pitt, despite a few



missteps, is so polished, and because you're dying to know if Death, in this contemporary retelling having sampled the wares, gets the girl. The film bears half a dozen writing credits, including Bo Goldman, which may explain its needlessly excessive length and mood swings. The tone, however, remains constant; it is the not unpleasant feel of a funeral parlor: soft, unusually intimate and oddly comforting. Parrish, a decent man of some wisdom, counsels Susan to find love and passion in a mate, a theme which recurs and infects Joe. In both films, Death finds love and the pain of losing it. While Joe Black, snapping abruptly out of his persona as an alien come to Earth and suddenly becoming savvy about tax evasion and the workings of the FBI (!), does the right thing by Parrish; as Death he renounces love but, out of love, leaves us pondering (not necessarily satisfactorily) his supernatural solution, proving Death is endlessly seductive.

Others who have wielded the cinematic scythe include Monte Markham in the 1971 made-for-TV **Death** adaptation; Nicolas Cage in *City of Angels*, a loose remake of Wim Wenders' **Wings of Desire**; Bengt Ekerot in Bergman's **The Seventh Seal**; John Cleese in **The Meaning of Life**; Ian McKellen in **The Last Action Hero**; William Sadler in **Bill & Ted's Bogus Journey**; Joe Estevez in **Soultaker**; Ralph Pope in Woody Allen's **Deconstructing Harry**; Christopher Lee on **Saturday Night Live**; and Vincent Price as The Mysterious Mr. Death in **The Masque of the Red Death**. But for the best Death of all, no one can beat Frederic March. ~

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## The Phantom's JOY OF SETS

### TELE-VIDEO

#### COMEDY COLLECTIONS

The boys and 'bots in the front row riff anew in Shout! Factory's latest **MST3K** collection, **Mystery Science Theater 3000 XXXVII** (4-disc \$54.97). Joel Hodgson, Tom Servo and Crow T. Robot take on Hugo Grimaldi's 1965 sci-fi cheese slice **The Human Dupli-cators**, starring **Robot Monster** alum George Nader, Richard (Jaws) Kiel, Barbara Nichols and vet villain George Macready, and the Italo-produced post-apoc actioner **1990: Bronx Warriors** sequel **Escape 2000**. Mike Nelson, with the help of Tom and Crow, battle Del Tenney's jaw-dropping 1964 camp extravaganza **The Horror of Party Beach**, highlighted by Beach Boys wannabes the Del-Aires' stirring rendition of "The Zombie Stomp," and the juvenile Japanese sci-fier **Invasion of the Neptune Men**. New bonus material includes the behind-the-scenes featurettes **Leave The Bronx: Making Escape 2000**, **August on Neptune**, and **Return to Party Beach**, along with new introductions by Mary Jo (Pearl Forrester) Pehl, **MST Hour Wraps**, theatrical trailers, and four mini-posters by artist Steve Vance.

Acorn Media mixes mystery and comedy with the nine-episode **Agatha Raisin** (3-disc \$59.99 DVD), based on the M.C. Beaton bestsellers and starring Ashley Jensen as a high-powered London PR exec who finds herself an unlikely crime-solver in a small country village. Extras include behind-the-scenes featurettes and a photo gallery. Comic Lenny Henry leads a top UK cast that includes Cara (**Downton Abbey**) Theobald, Anthony (**Brideshead Revisited**) Andrews and Alice (**Tyrant**) Krige in Acorn's **The Syndicate: All or Nothing** (2-disc \$39.99), an upstairs vs. downstairs dramedy that sees beleaguered servants win a lottery.

MPI Media issues all four seasons of **The IT Crowd: The Complete Series** in a five-disc set (\$59.98) charting the comic misadventures of tech workers Richard Ayoade, Chris O'Dowd and Katherine Parkinson. Extras include commentaries, featurettes, deleted scenes, outtakes, interviews and more.

#### READY FOR CRIMETIME

Commander Bertrand Molina (Francois-Xavier Demaison) and his lieutenant Camille Guerin (Alice Pol) search for a missing teenage girl (Camille Razat) in the French investigative series **The Disappearance** (2-disc \$49.99). The set, new from Acorn Media,

assembles eight episodes, with optional English subtitles. Back in the UK, Detectives Martha Bellamy (Fay Ripley), Jack Weston (Damien Molony) and Charlie Steele (Clare-Hope Ashley) return in the same label's **Suspects Series Three and Four** (2-disc \$49.99). Acorn also issues the TV adaptation of Joseph Conrad's 1886 London-set novel dealing with terrorism, espionage and betrayal, **The Secret Agent** (\$34.99), toplining Toby Jones, Vicky McClure, Stephen Graham and Ian Hart.

Marta Dusseldorp, meanwhile, returns as the eponymous attorney in the eight-episode Australian show **Janet King, Series 2: The Invisible Wound** (3-disc \$49.99), complemented by behind-the-scenes featurettes and a photo gallery. Also from Down Under via Acorn is the 10-episode **Wentworth, Season 1** (3-disc \$59.99), a gritty women's prison series set at the titular facility and starring Danielle Cormack as a first-time offender forced to cope with brutal inmate rivalries and murder. The set arrives with extensive behind-the-scenes featurettes, cast and crew interviews, set tours and photo gallery.

HBO Entertainment debuts the acclaimed Richard Price-scripted miniseries **The Night of** (3-disc \$59.99 Blu-ray, \$49.99 DVD) detailing the case of a Pakistani-American college student accused of murder. John Turturro, Michael Kenneth Williams, Bill Camp, Jeannie Berlin and Glenn Headly lead a skilled ensemble cast.

David Schwimmer and Jim Sturgess play novice restaurateurs forced to navigate an NYC underworld populated by petty criminals, corrupt officials and violent gangsters in the AMC series **Feed the Beast: Season One** (Lionsgate, 2-disc \$29.98 DVD + Digital HD). Extras include behind-the-scenes segments, commentaries, deleted scenes, and gag reel.

Warner Archive opens its vaults to retrieve the highly regarded, if short-lived, legal suspense series **Sam Benedict** (6-disc \$53.99), starring longtime film noir icon Edmond O'Brien as the eponymous defense attorney, assisted by Richard Rust. Guest stars include Eddie Albert, Gloria Grahame, Ida Lupino, Burgess Meredith, Brock Peters, Claude Rains and a young Kurt Russell.

#### ADVENTURE VIDS

HBO revisits a distant past with its immensely popular **Game of Thrones: The Complete Sixth Season** (\$79.99 Blu-ray, \$69.99 DVD), starring Ian McShane, Ellie Kendrick, Nikola Coster-Waldau, Max von Sydow and Jonathan Pryce. Among the copious extras are three behind-the-scenes segments—**The Battle of the Bastards: An In-Depth Look**, **Recreating the Dothraki World** and **18 Hours at the Paint Hall**—along with multiple cast and crew audio commentaries and four deleted scenes.



Mill Creek offers 95 hours and 54 minutes (count'em) of angelic entertainment with its 20-disc box set **Charlie's Angels: The Complete Series** (\$69.98). Every Angel is represented—Kate Jackson, Farrah Fawcett, Jaclyn Smith, Cheryl Ladd, Shelley Hack and Tanya Roberts, along with once and future John Bosley David Doyle—in a set spanning the series' full five-season run. The same label goes the sci-fi route with **Sliders: The Complete Series** (\$44.98). The 15-disc set stars Jerry O'Connell, Cleavant Derricks, Sabrina Lloyd and John Rhys-Davies as the titular travelers who journey to an alternate Earth. Among the guest stars are such genre stalwarts as Julie Adams, Adrienne Barbeau, Robert Englund, Meg Foster and Michael York.

Jessica Raine, Hans Matheson, Clarke Peters and Mark Addy star in the gritty 8-episode Yorkshire-set British western **Jericho** (3-disc \$59.99 DVD), from Acorn Media. Extras include a 40-minute behind-the-scenes documentary. E One Entertainment counters with the conclusion of the AMC series **Hell on Wheels Season 5 Volume 2: The Final Episodes** (2-disc \$38.99 Blu-ray), with the last seven installments focusing on Cullen Bohannon (Anson Mount) and his quest to complete America's first transcontinental railroad. Extras include behind-the-scenes segments.

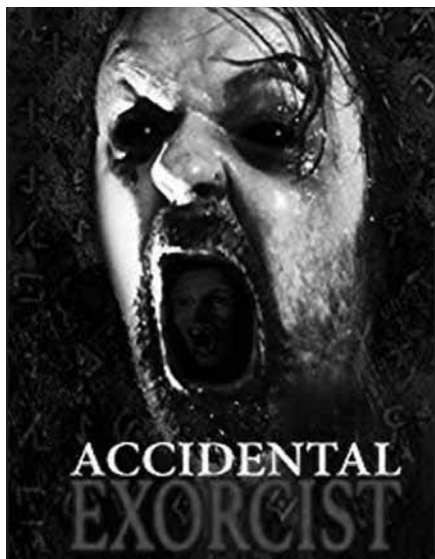
Daniel Wu stars as a determined fighter in a relentlessly violent post-apocalyptic world in the AMC series **Into the Badlands** (2-disc \$39.98 Blu-ray + Digital HD). Copious bonus featurettes include behind-the-scenes segments focusing on fight choreography, stunts, characters and more.

Dominic Cooper headlines as irreverent reverend Jesse Custer, caught in a supernatural alternate universe, in the comic book-based **Preacher: Season One** (3-disc \$65.99). Sony Pictures' Blu-ray set includes all debut season episodes along with behind-the-scenes segments, deleted & extended scenes, gag reel and more. ☿

## FILM FINDS

Shout! Factory shines a spotlight on controversial Canadian auteur David Cronenberg with a pair of new Blu-ray special editions. An infectious vampiric disease causes chaos galore in 1977's **Rabid** (\$34.93), starring Marilyn Chambers in her non-porn debut, and featuring Joe Silver and Frank Moore. Special features include a Cronenberg commentary, an additional audio track with author William Beard, new and archival interviews with Cronenberg, producer Ivan Reitman and co-producer Don Carmody, the video essay **From Stereo to Video**, the Cronenberg-centric **A History of Canadian Cinema** documentary, trailer, radio spots and more. Jeremy Irons shines in dual roles as gonzo gynecologists in Cronenberg's 1988 reality-inspired shocker **Dead Ringers** (\$34.93), costarring Genevieve Bujold and backed by two new commentaries, by actor Irons and author William Beard. Additional bonus content includes interviews with actors Stephen Lack and Heidi Von Pallese, director of photography Peter Suschitzky, and special effects artist Gordon Smith, plus vintage interviews, behind-the-scenes featurette, and trailer.

For the legions of **Phantasm** phans out there, Well Go USA presents **Phantasm Remastered** (2-disc Blu-ray + DVD set \$29.98), Don Coscarelli's original 1979 coming-of-age nightmare masterpiece in a new HD restoration conducted by filmmaker J.J. Abrams' Bad Robot Productions. Bonus features include an audio commentary with director/writer Coscarelli and iconic cast



members Michael Baldwin, Angus Scrimm and Bill Thornbury, a new **Graveyard Carz** episode, archival interviews with Coscarelli and Scrimm, deleted scenes and trailers, with choice of original mono mix or new 5.1 Surround mix. The same label likewise presents the franchise's latest installment, **Phantasm: Ravager** (\$24.98), starring Michael Baldwin, Reggie Bannister, Bill Thornbury and the late Angus Scrimm. Special features include an audio commentary with Coscarelli and **Ravager** director David Hartman, behind-the-scenes featurettes, deleted scenes, a **Phantasm** collection of outtakes and bloopers, and trailer.

Dark Sky Films celebrates one of the screen's most shocking characters with **Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer 30th Anniversary** edition (\$29.98), starring Michael Rooker in the title role. The Blu-ray comes equipped with a commentary by director John McNaughton, interviews with McNaughton, **Nightmare USA** author Stephen Thrower and artist Joe Coleman, the featurettes **In Defense of Henry**, **Henry vs. MPAA**, **Portrait: The Making of Henry**, along with deleted scenes & outtakes, trailers, still gallery, storyboards and more.

Chemical Burn Entertainment goes the frightcom route with a pair of offbeat titles. **Accidental Exorcist** chronicles the misadventures of an average guy burdened with an unwanted gift—a knack for knocking out demons—while Federico Sfascia's Italo import **Alienween** combines two venerable fear genres when aliens invade a party house on Halloween night. The DVDs are priced at \$19.95 each. ⚡

## Rob Freese's FRIGHT-FILM RARITY!

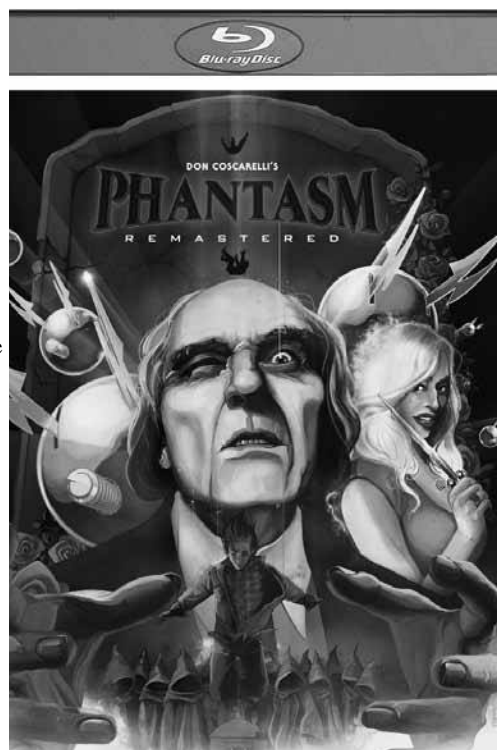
### OLIVE FILMS

(\$29.95 Blu-ray, \$24.95 DVD) 9/16

### THE MONSTER OF PIEDRAS BLANCAS (1958) B&W ⚡⚡⚡

D: Irvin Berwick. Jeanne Carmen, Les Tremayne, John Harmon, Don Sullivan, Forrest Lewis, Frank Arvidson. 71 mins.

There's a legend around the little coastal town of Piedras Blancas about a creature that lives in the caves near the shoreline that will go on a rampage if it is not fed. Kindly storekeeper Kochek (Arvidson) repeats the story until townspeople are sick of hearing it. Lighthouse keeper Sturges (Harmon) sets food out daily for the creature and warns his bimbo daughter Lucille (Carmen) to stay out of the water. Lucille (Carmen) skinnydips and swims with her boyfriend Fred (Sullivan), not worrying about whatever creature her crazy father is always yammering on about. Well, turns out there is a creature and when he misses a couple of meals he starts yanking the heads off of townies and Kochek's ice room starts piling up with bodies. The monster strikes without warning and in one incredible scene attacks a man in front of a crowd. This is one of most amazing man-in-a-monster-suit rampage flicks I have ever seen. For '58 it is quite gory with its abundance of severed noggins. Directed by the man who would eventually helm the equally amazing **Malibu High**, this one is pure fun. If you're a diehard fan of **Creature from the Black Lagoon** rip-off movies, you should not miss this incredible drive-in flick! ⚡





## CULT CLASSIC!

**FADE TO BLACK** (1980) 88 1/2

D: Vernon Zimmerman. Dennis Christopher, Tim Thomerson, Norman Burton, Morgan Paull, Gwynne Gilford, Linda Kerridge, Eve Brent Ashe, Peter Horton, Mickey Rourke. 102 mins. (Anchor Bay. n.i.d.)

Unbalanced film freak Eric Binford (Christopher) loses his grasp on reality and begins striking out at those who have hurt him under the guise of some of filmdom's most famous fiends. First Eric takes care of his overbearing Aunt Stella (Ashe), then his brutish, angry, two-fisted, sandwich-eating boss (Burton), then crooked film producer Paull. Slipping further into the reel world, Eric courts a Marilyn Monroe look-alike (Kerridge) and changes his name to that of his fave Cagney character, Cody Jarrett (from **White Heat**). Cops Thomerson and Gilford are in hot pursuit while tormentors Horton and Rourke top Eric's "s" list. (Rourke meets his demise in a western tableau at the hands of Binford in complete Hopalong Cassidy regalia.) Writer-director Zimmerman fashions an original, emotional, thought-provoking thriller that towers above the simple-minded slasher flicks of the time. Christopher is terrific as Eric, making the doomed character both sympathetic and despicable throughout. For film fans, **Fade** offers a wealth of movie memorabilia, trivia questions, vintage film clips, in-jokes, and inspired film references (e.g., Eric's mock photography studio sports the name **Blow Up**). One gets the impression that Zimmerman wasn't sure how to end his opus as his finale grows a bit heavy-handed and derailed, but not enough to mar the overall effect of this superb chiller. (In the late '80s/early '90s rush to sequelize everything, I was always surprised that Eric never resurfaced as an evil vidstore clerk, striking down renters who amassed large late-charge fees or refused to rewind tapes before returning them.) Now a DVD rarity, **Fade to Black** is fully deserving of a lavish new Blu-ray restoration, packed with bonus material. 8

—Rob Freese

## DENNIS

### CHRISTOPHER: NOT *FADE* AWAY!

As Told To  
Terry & Tiffany DuFoe

When not yet in his mid-20s, actor Dennis Christopher starred in a pair of very different cult films. 1979's **Breaking Away**, oft-described as a **Rocky** on wheels, was an expertly crafted, inspiring coming-of-age story about a young bike-racing hopeful and his three best buds; the following year's **Fade to Black** cast Christopher as a psychotic cinephile who assumed the identities of his fave film characters before completing his kills. Since then, Dennis has appeared in a wide range of movies and TV shows, including **Chariots of Fire**, **It**, **Dead Women in Lingerie**, **Star Trek: Deep Space Nine**, **Deadwood** and Tarantino's **Django Unchained**. Our dynamic dad & daughter duo and Cult Radio A-Go-Go! masterminds Terry & Tiffany DuFoe recently sat with Dennis Christopher to discuss his iconic roles and colorful career.

**TIFFANY DUFOE** I would say—maybe without going as far as Eric did—probably most of our readers are pretty much like Eric Binford! They are that obsessed with movies!

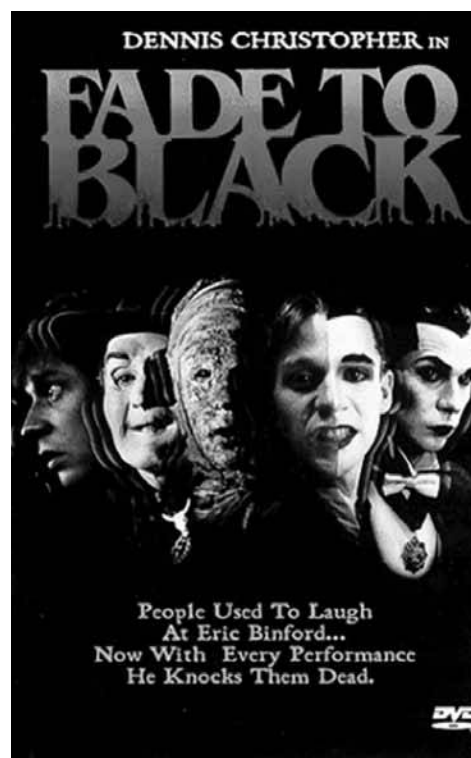
**DENNIS CHRISTOPHER** Listen, I was proud to be that guy! I was that guy for a bit. So, I know the Eric Binfords of the world! The ultimate fan geek!

**TD** Yes, for sure, and there is such a great story about **Fade to Black**. I want to get into that, but first off, everyone always mentions your latest and greatest things. If I was an actor, there would be two things that I would want to get: an Academy Award and that call from Quentin Tarantino [for **Django Unchained**], which I'm sure actors just wait to receive!

**DC** Oh man, you know it!

**TD** How did this all happen? I understand he watched every movie you ever made and that is why he wanted to work with you?

**DC** Well, that's what he told me the first time we met in a structured meeting. I didn't know him socially at all, and it seemed hard to believe. But I said, "You saw **Dead Women in Lingerie**?" And he said, "The day it opened! And what would be so unusual about me seeing a movie called **Dead Women in Lingerie**?" I said, "I guess nothing!" He had seen everything. So I was flattered and it was just the beginning of becoming so in awe of his cinematic knowledge of every kind of movie that you can imagine,



from every kind of genre that there is. He knows detail. He knows actors, certainly, writers, certainly, but the cinematographers. He knows the camera operators. He knows it all and he shares it with you in a way that you are always able to digest. You know, because people like that can sort of be a tsunami at times, but Quentin falls short of drowning you.

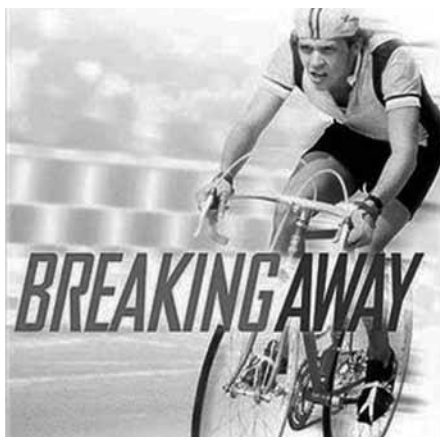
**TD** You look great in that western garb!

**DC** Oh, thanks. It was fun to be that guy. I was down there for four months. You're right. When the script arrived, I was in shock and devoured it the next day. Then about six months later I finally went in to see him and that was it. It was just a great afternoon.

**TD** If there is one thing that is really magical for an actor, it is to start out the way that you did. Of course I'm talking about **Breaking Away**. I understand it was supposed to be called **Bambino**?

**DC** Yep, yep! I can't tell you—to be in that movie was such a blessing for me because everybody I've encountered since always greets me with such good will. It's a really tremendous feeling to think a job you had several decades ago resonates with people and they treat you with such friendship and openness. People tell me the most wonderful stories about how they used that film to inspire them to change their lives. It's always a good thing to hear and always a really great feeling.

**TD** What were your first impressions of the script? Especially considering I believe you said you're non-athletic, so what did you think of the script in regards to athleticism? Bicycling wasn't something you did, was it?



**“I said, ‘You saw *Dead Women in Lingerie?*’ And he said, ‘The day it opened!’”**

**Dennis Christopher on Quentin Tarantino**

DC Everybody biked. I mean, biking was freedom as soon as you could get a bike! You could disappear from your house for hours. It was so much different then, growing up. I did all of that kind of cycling and when I worked in New York, I bicycled to work every day. But it wasn't the same world at all. People were not using bikes like they use them today, before **Breaking Away**. To answer the first part of your question: They had seen me in a Robert Altman movie called **A Wedding**. By “they” I mean Peter Yates, the director, and Steve Tesich, the really fantastic writer. They wrote the part that Dan Stern played, Cyril, with me in mind. When they started seeing actors for the other three guys, every 15 minutes three new guys would come in and I would stay behind because I was playing Cyril. I would read with these three other boys. Nobody knew who the lead was. It wasn't really delineated in those particular scenes. At one point, one of the guys that was coming to audition for the part of Dave, which is what I ultimately played, was late and people were backing up in the office outside. So they said to me, “Dennis, would you mind reading both parts?” They didn't know that I was half-Italian. They didn't know that I had lived in Italy and at this point had even worked for Fellini. When the Italian stuff came up, I kind of had fun with it. I could see that their faces were changing as the reading went on. By the time we finished the scene, they went out and talked and they came back and things were different and I was going to play Dave. That's how the part came to me. What I thought of the script? I thought the part of Dave—I would've much rather played Cyril at first read. Because it seemed like the part that I had was almost a cartoon with the shaving of the legs and the singing of the opera. I guess I hadn't known how deep this kid's obsession was for all things Italian. I hadn't figured that out yet after the first read. So I thought it was a very strange character, to say the least.

TD From what I understand, you actually added some of your own input to the character. Your Italian guy and theirs were a little different, right?

DC Yeah, well, they had envisioned the character to be like someone who escaped from **Saturday Night Fever**. When I showed up on the set, I had just gotten off of this other movie that I had done and I had missed all of the rehearsals for **Breaking Away** and the

first two weeks of shooting. The studio was getting furious with Peter Yates that I wasn't there. I couldn't get off this other movie. Anyway, I finally got down there after not sleeping and taking the red eye in and they transformed me into another person. They darkened my hair to dark brown and swept it up into a pompadour. They darkened my skin. They put me in skintight sort of polyester Ban-Lon black clothes. Skintight pants and a shirt unbuttoned down to the navel with gold chains on it and stuff. That kind of an Italian—and I kind of did what they said because it was a big job. I was intimidated already. We shot a whole day that way. I never slept that night and then the next day I thought, “I've got to quit. I can't do this. I have no idea what they're talking about. This is not the guy that I prepared to come down and play.” When I saw the director, I ran over to him and he hugged me and I hugged him. He's a very reserved English chap, you know, and I burst into tears. I said, “I can't play this part. I don't know what you want.” He said, “Go back to the hotel and get some sleep. Steve and I will be over.” So they came back to the hotel and we talked about it. I said, “This guy doesn't want to pretend to be Italian to get laid. He thinks he's Italian so his family and everything will *feel* better, because everything feels better when you're an Italian!” I mean, even heartbreak feels better when you're an Italian, you know what I mean? They're a very deeply felt people. Being half-Italian, I know. So, there was a discussion about that, because at one point they had the character on a folding bike, hitchhiking with hippies and smoking pot in the back of a van. It just didn't seem quite right. And still, it had that wonderful story about a class struggle in a town that no longer needed the people that mined the richness of that town and took that granite out of that quarry. That particular quarry is what they used to build Washington, D.C. All that you see in Washington, D.C., all of the Bloomington stuff went in there. Then it was dry and the jobs left.

TD Maybe it's because you are such an easy-to-talk-to guy, but I'm surprised to hear that Yates and Tesich were open to your changes for the character. We've talked to a lot of actors who have tried to change something about a script and the powers that be did not respond well. You seem to have been successful at that, without ticking anybody off. How do you do that so successfully?

DC I was really young, okay? They talk about



Dennis Christopher as Leonide Moguy in **Django Unchained**.

the “Golden Age of Filmmaking”—well, with Altman and all of these directors that were in their heyday, making these movies that were not about robots or the end of the world or even spaceships, there was this time where a lot of kismet was actually put up on the screen. So when people jelled and clicked, it wasn't a “deal.” I mean, I wouldn't be cast in this movie today, at all, even if I was young, because it would be a package situation at one of the major agencies that also handles the writer and the director. But before, a lot of people had the chance to show the kind of work that they could do because magic happened when the right people got together. They don't do that anymore. Everything is thought out and planned. I mean, independents do it for sure. That's why we continue to love them and support them. But the big movies, no. And this wasn't a big movie; it was kind of an independent-film budget, but it was 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox. It wasn't like a regular independent now. There was money there to get done what we needed to get done. The cinematographer [Matthew F. Leonetti] went on to be famous. The camera operator [James Glennon] went on to be famous. Everybody was young and in their prime working for nothing and happy to do it.

TD What was it like working with your fellow **Breaking Away** cast members? Were you all good friends and do you keep in touch nowadays? If some of you are still in contact, was there ever any talk of a sequel? Were you ever offered a role on the TV spin-off series?

**“I loved playing that guy. I couldn't stop thinking about the character.”**

**Dennis Christopher on  
*Fade to Black*'s  
Eric Binford**

DC Yeah, well, to get it out of the way, they came to me, of course, talking about the television series. I said to my agent, “I don't want to hear any money. I just kind of want to, on the QT, read the script.” I read the script and said no and my agent said, “Can I still not tell you any numbers or any figures?” I said, “Don't tell me because I really can't afford to say no, but I'm saying no.” Because it was just a recycle of the movie every week. It was a retread, the series was. I don't think it was bad for anyone to take it that took it. It's just that I was finally in a movie and I didn't want to do it. It wasn't as fluid back then. You didn't go back and forth between television and films like you do now. We [the **Breaking Away** cast] got along like a house afire! I don't know why but we really did. Dennis Quaid and I were tight before it because we did a movie called **September 30, 1955** from Jim Bridges about the day James Dean died. So we knew each other and he was married to PJ Soles at the time. I was always such a fan of Jackie Earle Haley that I was so gobsmacked to meet him and we got along really great too and still do. This friend asked us to appear at this charity thing and we did a bike appearance. Danny [Stern] couldn't make it because his daughter was graduating, but yeah, we were really tight. It was really wonderful.

TD Have you gotten any comments from Jackie Earle Haley as far as his having played Freddy Krueger in the **Nightmare on Elm Street** reboot? I know a lot of times people who have been in the business for that many years might hesitate taking on a franchise reboot like that.

DC No, I think now is the time. There's a certain point in acting where you get to try to interpret great parts. In the theater, that's never a deterrent, that somebody played this or played that or did a brilliant Hamlet. I think it's a challenge and I'm sure Jackie looked at it that way—and the man's gotta work! And he kicked ass...as he always does! Whether he's two minutes in that scene in the Scorsese movie **Shutter Island**—his two minutes behind bars in that movie is f\*cking searing. He's great on film. He's great in anything that he does. I'm still a huge fan of his.

TD What was it like working on the Federico Fellini film **Roma**? I believe your role was uncredited..

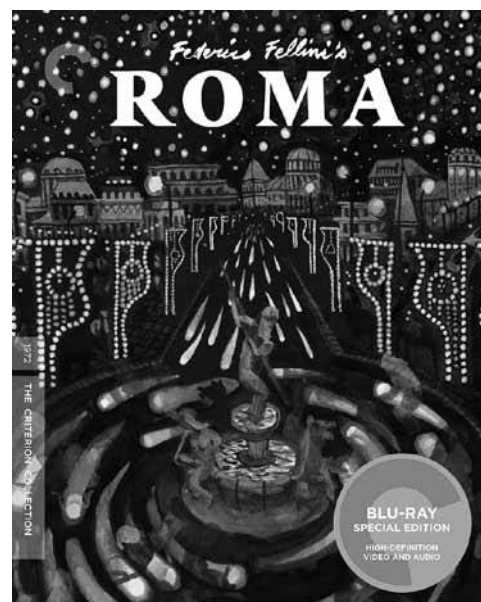
DC Oh totally, and small, but as you can imagine, with Fellini, the stuff that stayed in it was a little bit impactful! I had always wanted to be a hippie and it was kind of over here in the US. So I had to go to Europe to find hippies. I remember getting a tax refund and I bought a one-way bucket flight to London and had \$73. I was really young and I thought, “Well, I'm broke here in L.A. Let me go to this incredible continent and be broke there!” The hippies are getting just too seedy over here. I want to go where there's all that peace and love. I found it and in that mix I found Fellini—or I should say he found me. Just a chance meeting with Fellini on the street. It's a rather involved story. It's really kind of funny and I ended up being part of his little troupe of actors. He wants you to be on the set every night whether he uses you or not because he just has these faces that are kind of in his mind that he likes to drop in here and there and I was one of these people. I had two scenes in it that are still in the movie but they're very short. It was an amazing time to be that young and to be living in Rome and to be working for Fellini. It was just every fantasy I had imagined while I was languishing under the California sun. It was kind of there for the taking. The world was so improvisational and within everyone's grasp at one point. And I grabbed!

TD You walked in on a shot that Fellini was setting up, is that right?

DC Yes—there was a model named Veruschka who I'd only seen in magazines and she walked by this little outdoor place where we were eating. I was kind of mesmerized. She really got a head start and then I thought, “I'm following that woman!” I just got up and followed her and then got completely lost in all those little streets in the center of Rome. I'd never been there before. I turned down one and there was this thing going on! It was one of those scenes of excess from a Fellini movie and I kind of wandered right into the middle of it. There was a confrontation and it turned out to be a lovely one—and I suddenly had a job. I had to come back dressed exactly the same way the next night. It was no problem because I think I only had one pair of jeans anyway.

TD Not too long after **Breaking Away**, you snagged the role of Eric Binford in **Fade to Black**. I understand that **Fade to Black** started out as being a lot different than what we ended up seeing on the screen. Can you tell us a little about how you got the role and how the project changed with your involvement?

DC I know the script had been around for a while because you could just tell it was a script that had been rewritten many times. Rewriting on computers is particularly perplexing, or can be, because you can just lift a scene out and rewrite a scene. In the old days, you had to rewrite the whole thing, so you got to see if it flowed. Now you can pull out a scene, chop it up, rewrite it and stick it back in, and there's no flow at times.



So you could tell that the script was really hacked by this torturous rewrite process. They had put [writer/director] Vernon Zimmerman through all the different people that wanted to produce it, but then Irwin Yablans, who I just love working for, got a hold of it. He was our main producer on that film. I was sort of hot at the moment and they came after me. I was really always saying no, but they were continually persuasive in ways that made me say, “Wow! They pay you this much to be in a movie? They don't know that I would pay them!” So I went in and we had a lot of creative meetings on it. Vernon and I were really in sync. I said, “It seems to me that people have made you rewrite this script so many times. Let's talk about the original thought behind that scene.” A lot more truth came out in the movie as far as this man's particular mental illness was concerned. It was a little vague before. We sort of hooked that up with the artistic part of the movie as well.

TD That character is what every hardcore movie fan feels, and what some of the crazier ones might want to do but of course can't. Did you feel like you could identify with the character?

DC I loved playing that guy. I couldn't stop thinking about the character. As sort of awkward as each scene was and the actual dialogue as written was, I couldn't stop thinking about the opportunity of playing this character. Vernon's creation of this character was brilliant. And you can still see that feeling in the movie. We don't quite hit the mark, but I had a ball playing Eric Binford and with the help of Irwin Yablans I was able to make a lot of those fantasies come true, including dying on the top of the Chinese Theater! **Fade to Black** was supposed to be over in the photo studio. There was supposed to be a big shoot-out with her [Linda Kerridge] lying there nude somehow. Irwin and I talked about it and Vernon and I said, “He's got to make his way to the Chinese Theater. He's got to try to get into that screen.” There was no ending. It was just a shoot-out with police.



**“Could you imagine? Blondie coming in and saying, ‘We want to do your soundtrack!’”**

**Dennis Christopher on *Fade to Black***

*TD Were you actually up on top of the Chinese Theater in reality?*

DC Oh yeah! We built a stage, too, to look just like it, but no, I was up on the thing. Absolutely. Then we built a stage, too, for the falling off and stuff, you know. But it was amazing. Hollywood Blvd. right now is very glossy, but you all remember what it was like back then.

*TD One of the great things about **Fade to Black** is the chemistry between you and your costar Linda Kerridge. Did you know her before the film?*

DC No, I didn't, but I just fell hard for Linda Kerridge. Very underrated actress. They were treating her with an immense amount of “oh, she's the girl.” You know, her character didn't even have a name. I said, “Listen, if this is my love interest, this has got to be a better situation.” There were a lot of last-minute solutions on that. There was a big fantasy number of her singing “Diamonds Are a Girl's Best Friend.” Linda was all prepared for it. It was choreographed and everything. They wanted to find out how much that was going to cost to get the rights for the song until the day of the shoot and they nixed it. So then there were no references to her as Marilyn Monroe left in the movie. The first reason why they were interested in Linda was because of her ability to transform herself into Marilyn. I said, “This is *not* going to be in the movie?” So with her, with the same dress and sort of a Vaseline-up lens, because there was no real background, they went in real close, and this was all at mine and Linda's suggestion, and she sang “Happy Birthday” a la Marilyn singing “Happy Birthday” to President Kennedy. She did a fabulous job just like that. The cameraman barely had time to get it together and do it. I think it's a high point in the movie. It was on film, it was shot, and it was so brilliant—and it was only later that they found out that you have to pay for “Happy Birthday,” too! With it already on film, they said, “We'll pony up for that.”

*TD I understand that at the time you were good friends with Chris Stein and Debbie Harry of Blondie.*

DC Oh yeah! Do you have their album **Autoamerican**? The intro into that is an instrumental piece and that was going to be

the theme to **Fade to Black** because Chris and Debbie read the script after I sent it to them and they were very excited about it. They wanted to get to work on it but this is something that the producers messed up on. Could you imagine? Blondie coming in and saying, “We want to do your soundtrack!” Chris at the time was real interested in doing soundtracks. He turned out to be brilliant at doing it. And they [the producers] blew it. But at least that one beautiful haunting song is on **Autoamerican** and that was going to be our theme.

*TD I'm dying to find out how they picked the celebrities you impersonated in **Fade to Black** and which film clips to use? How was it decided it was going to be *Dracula* and the *Mummy* and a semi-impersonation of the *Creature From the Black Lagoon*? Did it have to do with licensing?*

DC I think there was a little bit of licensing with the *Creature* because I think the original one was Frankenstein's Monster when he carries the girl into the woods. It's just a snap of the *Creature* holding a woman screaming or something.

*TD We noticed that in the film an 8x10 was shown of Bela Lugosi, but when they actually showed video footage during the *Dracula* kill scene, it was Sir Christopher Lee.*

DC Yes, yes. That was another licensing thing as well. I was really crestfallen when that happened. I didn't know it until after the movie was cut together. It made me even happier that the 8x10 of Bela as *Dracula* was there by the mirror because I decorated that room, by the way. I cut out the thousands of pictures that were all over the walls and put them up.

*TD Really?*

DC Yeah. It was pathetic. They had like two horror movies that you've never heard of in your life that they could get the rights to the posters of. They stuck one in the bathroom and one in his room and that was supposed to be the extent of his collection. When I saw it I went, “Oh, no no no.” I had a good friend who was working with me at the time and I said, “Here, go back to my house and get every magazine that you can find everywhere—anywhere! The scissors are in the drawer. Bring them back.” At lunch time, we had cut up a million pictures. They were all of celebrities. Tiny ones. Big ones. It was quite a room that we made really, really fast. In **Fade to Black**, I got to be James Cagney. I got to be Bela Lugosi. I got to be Laurence Olivier. I got to really have fun. The Laurence Olivier part, **The Prince and the Showgirl** part, was not in it at all either. I said, “You're going to give Eric Binford, tragic hero, a leading lady and he's not going to get to kiss her or almost kiss her? He's not going to imagine a romantic scene? Is he just a craven f—cking killer?” He's not a craven killer. He's a movie lover. He's a cinephile. He knows the best of life can be experienced in a movie in his poor twisted mind! And there was no love scene. I

lured her back to a photo studio to make her pose nude on red satin like the Marilyn calendar. But that was it! There was no dialogue. There was no like *how* did I get her nude! I said, “Wait a minute! What about **The Prince and the Showgirl**?” They said, “How are you going to explain it?” I said, “She's so high, she loves it! We've got to shoot the whole thing in the mirror because if you shoot it in the mirror, you can see these two little kids, that are really high, and they're playing dress-up...and there's guns involved...and that's drama!” And Vernon went, “Yeah! Okay!” Just get a bunch of white furniture, man, and some champagne. We've got makeup stations here. Just get light bulbs to put all around it, you know, because they're always broken. Vernon and I had a ball rescuing this story from horrifying rewrites and then, you know, I can't imagine what people's thoughts were or intentions were. But I think the people that were trying to make this the movie that you saw glimpses of were me, Vernon and Irwin Yablans, but it takes more than that. Like with **Breaking Away**, it takes all things clicking, all things firing.

*TD It would've been very, very sad if the characterizations had been poorly performed but they were great. Also, the look of the characters was fantastic. The makeup was very well done. You came up with the vampire makeup for the *Dracula* characterization?*

DC Oh yeah, totally. I said that he's got to be high-fashion *Dracula*. He's just got to be a modern vintage, if that's possible. And it was Mickey Rourke's first movie!

*TD Absolutely! I've always said to myself they're going to remake that someday and I'm so glad they have not. I don't know if you're even interested anymore, Dennis, but you've got a script for **Fade to Black Part 2**.*

DC How did you find that out?

*TD Well, we're professional stalkers, remember?*

DC I'll say! I don't foresee it now, but it was a really great idea and it was really featuring Linda and whoever was going to play me as a young man. It was tight. But I wanted to say I've got a new TV show on Epix. It's called **Graves** and I've got a plum bit in it. Nick Nolte plays an ex-President who used to be a wastrel and then he was a President. He's caused a lot of problems and a lot of suffering in the country because of his Draconian ways. He has a change of heart and it's quite funny and wonderful how he conducts his life after that. It's got a great, great cast. Everybody that you can think of turns up, with real politicians too. Bernie Sanders filmed something. Barney Frank. Rudy Giuliani. Our producer, Bill Hill, was the producer of **Veep** for the first seven years. Joshua Stern is our writer, creator, director. This has been fun—and your research is unparalleled! I had almost forgotten about that sequel to **Fade to Black**. I can't believe it. Thank you! ☺

# GODZILLA ROARS AGAIN!

By Dan Cziraky

**SHIN-GODZILLA** (2016) ギャラクシー

D: Hideko Anno, Shinji Higuchi. Hiroki Hasegawa, Yutaka Takenouchi, Satomi Ishihara. 120 mins. (Funimation Films) TBA

Toho Company, Ltd., seems to be making a habit of allowing others to attempt its success with Godzilla, only to step in after the fact and show them how it's done. In 1998, after TriStar's **Godzilla** (VS #28) was drubbed by critics and fans alike, Toho produced **Godzilla 2000: Millennium** (1999, VS #37). It started a new series of films that, like 1984's **The Return of Godzilla**, ignored all other films in the franchise except 1954's **Gojira** (VS #61). This series was unique in that, with the sole exception of 2000's **Godzilla vs. Megaguirus** (VS #50), all of the other films were also reboots. The Millennium Series ended with 2004's **Godzilla: Final Wars** (VS #59), after which Toho shelved the character while actively seeking a new production partner for another big-budget American reboot. The result was 2014's **Godzilla** (VS #93), developed by Legendary Pictures and directed by Gareth Edwards (**Monsters, Rogue One: A Star Wars Story**). Although the film proved both a box-office smash and critically successful, with plans for several sequels and a team-up pic with Legendary's upcoming **Kong: Skull Island** star, Toho honchos once again decided the time was ripe to produce their own reboot. (Their licensing deal with Legendary doesn't prevent them from producing Godzilla films for Japanese distribution.) And this time, it would be a true reboot, presenting an all-new version of their King of the Monsters in a modern setting. Produced in the fall of 2015, **Shin-Godzilla** ("shin" meaning "new," "true," or "God," depending upon context), released in Japan in July 2016, was the top-grossing live-action film of the year. Funimation Films, which specializes in Asian imports, announced its acquisition of **Shin-Godzilla** at San Diego Comic-Con, with a limited mid-October theatrical release prior to its home-video debut.

The abandoned yacht *Glory-Mar* is being boarded by the Japanese coast guard when the boat is suddenly attacked. Moments later, the Tokyo Bay Aqua-Line tunnel floods and collapses. A viral video shows a large creature, bigger than a whale, moving in the water. As the Japanese government assembles to address the crisis, Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Rando Yaguchi (Hasegawa) believes that a living animal is responsible.

Initially ignored, Yaguchi's theory is confirmed when news reports reveal a massive tail thrashing in the water. The creature then swims up a densely populated river, destroying everything in its path. The government scrambles to make provisions to evacuate the area, and the Prime Minister assures people that the creature is too large to come ashore. Soon it does just that, crawling awkwardly. It stops, rising up on its hind legs and suddenly starts to change. Its hind legs become more powerful, its gill slits close up, and clawed arms sprout from its torso. The Japanese Self-Defense Forces are tasked with aiding in the evacuation of civilians, as well as the monster's destruction. Just as attack helicopters are prepared to fire on the beast, straggling civilians are spotted on the ground. The attack is aborted, and the creature flees back to the sea.

The Prime Minister and his cabinet focus on military strategy and civilian safety, while Special Aide Hideki Akasaka (Takenouchi) recruits Yaguchi to head a task force of experts "with balls" to research the creature and find an exploitable weakness. High radiation levels in its wake indicate that the monster is radioactive, and two team members confirm that it exists via nuclear fission. The military searches the waters off Japan for signs of the creature but it has disappeared. International teams begin to arrive, offering disaster relief and expert advice. Kayoko Ann Patterson (Ishihara), the part-Japanese daughter of a U.S. Senator, arrives and meets with Yaguchi, revealing that the U.S. had advance knowledge of the creature. Years earlier, Goro Maki, a biology professor with ties to the U.S. Department of Energy, discovered that an ancient form of marine life had fed on radioactive waste illegally dumped into the Pacific Ocean off the coast of Japan since the 1950s. The creature was rapidly mutating and he dubbed it Godzilla (*Gojira* in Japanese), after the legendary sea monster that supposedly lived in the waters off Ohdo Island, Maki's home. The U.S. covered it up and Maki fled back to Japan. The abandoned yacht was Maki's and he left all of his data onboard before drowning himself.

After several days, Godzilla reappears and comes ashore near Kamakura. Nearly twice its last reported size, it is on a direct path towards Tokyo. The JSDF is mobilized and the city is immediately evacuated. All military assets are deployed against the monster, but its skin is too tough to pierce with conventional weapons. The army suffers major losses as Godzilla enters Tokyo. The U.S., requesting full access to study Godzilla's remains, is granted permission to attack. Bombers drop bunker-busters on it, halting the monster's progress and seeming to have finally damaged it, but Godzilla recovers and unleashes a devastating beam of nuclear energy from its mouth. As more bombers close in, Godzilla vents more beams through its mouth, dorsal spines, and even tail! All bombers are destroyed, along with major portions of the city. The Prime Minister and most of his cabinet are killed while being evacuated by helicopter. Its energy depleted,

Godzilla is dormant in the heart of the ruins. Having earlier discovered that Godzilla's dorsal spines and blood act as a cooling system for his nuclear fission, Yaguchi's team submits a plan to immobilize the beast with a blood coagulant, shutting down his internal reactor. The plan is approved but it will take time to produce enough coagulant. Seeing Godzilla as a global threat, the United Nations, at the urging of the U.S. President, informs the new interim Japanese government that the use of nuclear weapons against Godzilla has been authorized. Yaguchi believes Godzilla will remain dormant for the next 15 days, and Patterson agrees to help push his plan forward with her government. Scientists battle the clock, knowing if they fail, Tokyo will be obliterated and Japan will again suffer a nuclear attack.

**Shin-Godzilla** delivers an interesting mix of monster mayhem and political satire. While the 1954 film was made with the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki still fresh in audience's memories and atomic testing in the Pacific ongoing, **Shin-Godzilla** takes its cues from the March 2011 triple disaster of an earthquake, tsunami, and the resulting Fukushima nuclear plant accident. The main government is endlessly bogged down in red tape, while Yaguchi's team is composed of ragtag professionals who work 'round-the-clock to save the day (like the "Fukushima 50" who stayed behind and stabilized the crippled reactor). Of course, the monster action is key to any Godzilla film, and this one delivers. Godzilla goes through a few metamorphoses, starting out as a googly-eyed cross between an eel and a frilled shark, with legs. He then changes into a more familiar look, but is obviously still in a juvenile state. When he finally emerges to do the Tokyo Stomp, he's a mean, nasty piece of work. He's also bigger than ever, at over 118 meters (387 feet) tall! This guy is impervious to most modern weapons, lives off just air and water, and even reproduces asexually. While traditional suit-mation has been replaced by a combination of puppetry, animatronics, and CGI, the realism achieved is amazing. Godzilla looks more organic and moves with the heft of the largest land animal ever (motion-capture performance provided by Mansai Nomura). The directing chores were split between Anno and Higuchi of **Neon Genesis Evangelion** animé fame, and Godzilla's redesign is courtesy of Mahiro Maeda. The human cast, always a secondary consideration in these films, is adequate, although Ishihara just isn't credible as an American-born woman with a Senator for a father. Her English is heavily accented and she is far less Westernized than she should be. Hasegawa and Takenouchi spout political jargon-packed dialogue with convincing ease.

As VS #101 was going to press, Funimation had not revealed any details of its Blu-Ray or DVD releases for **Shin-Godzilla**. This review is based on an advanced DVD screener of the film. ギャ

—Dan Cziraky

## FEARFESTS '70s STYLE

### ARROW VIDEO

(\$39.95 2-disc Blu-ray + DVD) 7/16

**MICROWAVE MASSACRE** (1983) ♂  
D: Wayne Berwick. Jackie Vernon, Loren Schein, Al Troupe, Claire Ginsberg, Marla Simon, Anna Marlowe. 76 mins.

Pathetic schlub Donald (Vernon) complains incessantly that his wife May's (Ginsberg) grotesque gourmet cooking is ruining his lunch time. He's so preoccupied dropping dumb zingers and one-liners he doesn't even notice a random woman who pushes her bare breasts through double knotholes in the construction site's safety fence. Donald finishes his day first by going to a bar to have a couple drinks with his friends and complain about May's cooking some more, then he goes home and gets into a fight with his wife over her cuisine. There are two ovens in the kitchen, but May just had a giant microwave installed so she can boil the snot out of some gross-sounding French food. When Donald can take no more, he loses his mind and beats May's head in. After he sees a police procedural show on TV, he gets the idea to eat May's body to get rid of the evidence of his crime. Soon he realizes what a delicacy human flesh is. Donald brings a hooker home and gets horny at the idea of eating her, so he kills her. More random women follow this loser home for sex and death. In the end, May's microwave gets the last laugh. In horror-comedy terms, I found very little about this film horrifying or funny. For me it never rises to the goofy gross-out frightcoms of H.G. Lewis or the similarly plotted **The Undertaker and His Pals**. Vernon's voice never seems to get out of your head after you're done watching it either. At an abbreviated running time of 76 minutes, it still seems to take forever to get over. In fact, if you know someone who complains about life being too short, I'd recommend sitting them down in front of this movie. Somewhere around the

17-minute mark they'll be convinced that life is too damn long! The flick does boast art direction from **The Texas Chainsaw Massacre's** Robert Burns, who also has a small role as a garbage-picking bum. My favorite character is an angry bartender who tells people to keep their problems to themselves. I remember the old oversized Midnight Video box when **Microwave Massacre** was first released on VHS. I did give the flick the benefit of the doubt with a second look, which did enable me to see some of the humor in it, especially since I knew what I was getting myself into. I have no doubt this was an excellent party tape back in the day, and now thanks to the archivists at Arrow Video the film looks terrific, like it was shot yesterday. Extras include a commentary by writer-producer Craig Muckler, a making-of featurette that includes interviews with director Berwick, Muckler, and actor Schein, a trailer and a booklet that contains a very entertaining write-up by exploitation scholar Stephen Thrower. Love it or hate it, it has certainly carved out its place in horror-film history.

—Rob Freese

### GRINDHOUSE RELEASING

(\$39.95 2-Blu-ray Set) 11/16

**I DRINK YOUR BLOOD: 2-BLU-RAY DELUXE EDITION** (1971) Film ♂♂♂/Blu-rays ♂♂♂

D: David Durston. Bhaskar, Jadine Wong, Rhonda Fultz, George Patterson, Arlene Farber, Lynn Lowry. 83 mins.

Originally paired (by aptly named genre entrepreneur Jerry Gross) with **I Eat Your Skin**—a rather fanciful retitling of **Del (Horror of Party Beach)** Tenney's tame 1964 terror turkey **Voodoo Bloodbath** (aka **Zombie**)—our story centers on a roving band of Mansonoid "hippies" led by one Horace ("Satan was an acidhead!") Bones (agreeably overacted by the mono-monikered Bhaskar). When our itinerant lowlifes slip LSD to an unsuspecting elderly local, the latter's enterprising 12-year-old grandson strikes back by selling them a batch of meat pies that he's injected with rabid-dog's blood (a cogent argument for the vegetarian lifestyle). In no time, the frothing free spirits are not only literally at one another's throats but infecting the citizenry, including a band of already volatile hardhats who embark on a rampage of their own, an overt reference to the contemporaneous riots and protests sparked by an increasingly unpopular Vietnam War, with all the gut-spilling and dismemberment generally absent from those actual incidents. Withal, **I Drink Your Blood** is at once professional and raw enough to make for compelling, if relentlessly unpleasant, viewing. Grindhouse Releasing's double-disc Blu-ray set marks a ma-



jor visual step up from previous VHS releases—for one thing, you can actually *see* the onscreen mayhem, even in the night scenes, in all its sordid glory—and from the earlier DVD edition. Director Durston (who's since passed on) and Bhaskar team up for a most diverting archival audio commentary, packed with backstories galore, as they good-naturedly yak their way through this uncut edition. Other extras include a new second audio track with actors Tyde Kierney and Jack Damon, an in-depth Durston interview, on-camera interviews with Kierney, Damon and fellow thesp Lynn Lowry (who more recently starred in Debbie Rochon's directorial debut **Model Hunger** [Wild Eye Releasing]), four deleted scenes, including the original ending (deemed too graphic at the time), the original theatrical trailer and radio spot, and a rare film of veteran terpsichorean Bhaskar performing his patented "Evil King Cobra Dance." Of especial interest in these quarters is the extensive gallery of stills and poster art, which concludes with **The Monster Times'** profuse coverage of the film's initial release. In short, just about everything you ever wanted to know about **I Drink Your Blood**. A second Blu-ray disc, meantime, presents the complete **I Eat Your Skin** in HD, with a bonus interview with 2nd unit director and self-described swamp man William Greffe, and Durston's 1969 psychedelic sex shocker **Blue Sextet**, making its home-video debut. And that's not to mention the bonus souvenir Official **I Drink Your Blood** Horror Hypo, next time you want to "Draw Blood from Rabid Dogs!" and "Infect Your Friends with Rabies!"

—The Phantom





# **LUIGI COZZI:** **BLOOD ON** **MELIÈS' MOON** As Told To Chris Hallock

In the early 1970s, Italian filmmaker Luigi Cozzi (aka Lewis Coates) forged a lifelong partnership with Dario Argento that set his career in motion. He co-scripted (with Argento) 1973's **Four Flies on Grey Velvet** (VS #71), considered one of the finest films of the giallo era. His collaborations with Argento continued with **Door Into Darkness** (1973), a short-lived Argento-produced macabre television series, 1985's **Phenomena** (VS #31) (as visual effects coordinator), and co-directing, alongside Argento, 1990's **Two Evil Eyes** (VS #47) and 1995's **The Stendhal Syndrome** (VS #36). Also of note is Cozzi's solo work on **De Profundis** (1989, aka **The Black Cat and Demons 6**), an unofficial entry in Argento's then-unfinished "Three Mothers" trilogy. Cozzi helmed a number of solo productions spanning a spectrum of genres, work characterized by earnest charm and unfettered fun, earning him a cult following. His roster includes titles as varied as the blackly comedic 1973 giallo **The Killer Must Kill Again** (VS #55), the gloriously batty 1978 sci-fi epic **Starcrash** (VS #77), the 1980 alien splatterfest **Contamination** (VS #96), the hit Lou Ferrigno fantasy vehicle **Hercules** (1983) and sequel **Hercules 2** (1985). His final solo narrative work **Paganini Horror** (1989) was followed by a pair of documentaries commissioned by Argento, **Argento: Master of Horror** (1991) and **The World of Dario Argento 3: The Museum of Horrors** (1997). After more than two decades on hiatus, Cozzi returns with his latest film, **Blood on Méliès' Moon**, a personal journey and love letter to the cinema that inspired him blending documentary, mystery, epic science fiction, humor and horror, and featuring appearances by Argento, Lamberto Bava, and Cozzi himself.

—CH

**CHRIS HALLOCK** What prompted your return to film production after a lengthy absence with **Blood on Méliès' Moon**? Were you offered an opportunity by producers or did you initiate the production yourself?

**LUIGI COZZI** In early 2014 I did realize that today it is possible to shoot a fully professional movie very easily, with a very limited crew of two, three persons, and even using your own cell. So I started thinking about an idea for such a movie to be made independently, in full artistic freedom and control, and

without spending a lot of money. **Blood on Méliès' Moon** is the result after two years in the making. But working without money has never been a problem for me: I started my movie career back in 1968 shooting in just four days an independent sci-fi movie titled **The Tunnel Under the World**, and when I directed pics like **Starcrash** and **Hercules**, these two pics were big budget for sure, but even then the money wasn't up to the sums which had been really needed to properly film their scripts, so I had to invent solutions to hide the fact that even then the money wasn't enough. Same rules apply to **Blood on Méliès' Moon**, which looks much more expensive than it really was.

**CH** The film is so unusual. How would you describe it?

**LC** Every picture should be unusual, you know? The pictures today are too much similar. **Blood on Méliès' Moon** is a very personal movie. Mainly it's about two forms of love: my love to the cinema and the love between a man and a woman. Yeah, basically it's a movie about love, the power of love, which in the end overcomes all. But my flick is also partly a mockumentary, an autobiographical story and a science fantasy epic. It's a mix of genres.

**CH** When you started writing the screenplay, did you always know you were going to make yourself a big part of the story or was that something that happened as the story evolved?

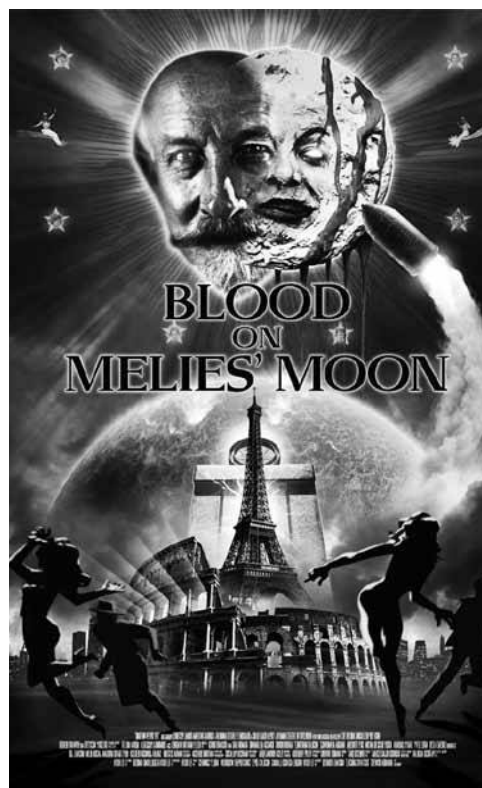
**LC** No, I started from another point of view. I was going to do it independent—this meaning I had no money, no budget. So, I started to think, "What could I get for free?" So I realized a good set was Dario Argento's Museum of Horror which we run, so we have it for free. I started to think of a story which could start in the Argento Museum, which looks good on the screen, and absolutely free for me. All the choices I did was because of no budget. The whole picture cost less than ten thousand dollars. I think it doesn't show [poorly] on the screen.

**CH** I think it works wonderfully for fans of your work, Dario Argento's work, Lamberto Bava's work because when you're watching it's full of Easter eggs, like hidden features on a DVD. When you watch the film, it works like a time capsule because you'll notice posters from the films you've worked on, recognize music cues and even some sound effects. Was that something you intended as a gift to the fans of Italian genre cinema?

**LC** Yeah, I did that—I was willing to do that.

**CH** How did you end up recruiting Dario Argento and Lamberto Bava to appear in the film?

**LC** Both Argento and Bava are very close friends of mine. I just told them that I wanted them to play themselves in my new movie...and they accepted immediately. So in **Blood on Méliès'**



**Moon** you have the opportunity to see how they are and behave in real life. Same applies to other friends who play themselves, like screenwriter Antonio Tentori (Lucio Fulci's **Nightmare Concert**, Argento's **Dracula 3-D**) and movie critic Paolo Zelati, who wildly plays as himself in the "Ed Wood's nightmare" sequence.

**CH** What was it like for you to appear in your own film?

**LC** Being **Blood on Méliès' Moon** is a mix between my own real and fantasy worlds, I decided to play myself the leading role in it. But I decided so also because, having decided to shoot the movie over a long period of time (two years in the end) in order to save money and not hiring a full crew, I needed an actor whom I could have always at my full disposal for free and all over such a long period of time: that's why I thought of...me! All free and always at disposal! Of course, I know that I'm not an actor (neither I do wanna be one), but in this case I had to play the role of Luigi Cozzi...so who could be on the screen a better Luigi Cozzi than myself? And incredibly, I even got good reviews for my "acting"!

**CH** Something that struck me was how funny you are. Do you find that liberating, to share the humorous side of yourself?

**LC** Yes, but there's always humor in my films—it's hidden. People usually take them seriously but there's a lot of tongue-in-cheek. Like in the giallo I did **The Killer Must Kill Again**, it's a luckless killer who's particularly compelled to kill because he never makes one thing work. So he must kill again to make things work.

**“Never before during my career had I received so many compliments: I’ve been really very, very surprised.”**

**Luigi Cozzi**

*CH That must also work as a comment on the career of the filmmaker.*

*LC Yeah, that's black humor.*

*CH You centered the story around the mysterious disappearance of Louis Le Prince. How did that become a component of the story when you were writing the screenplay?*

*LC I write many books here about the history of film, or genre, science fiction mostly. One day, studying an old book, I discovered the story of this man and was really puzzled by it, this sudden disappearance. I realized that could be a good element for my story because it already involved Lumière and Méliès and I added this guy which is a good historical note. Nobody knows about it.*

*CH It's important to realize it's often a missing footnote in cinema history.*

*LC Yes. It's on the books but nobody ever read the books, you know?*

*CH You never hear about Louis Le Prince in film history classes.*

*LC Yes, it's in the history books. If you go to Leon where there is the Lumière Institute, they have a plaque for every guy who made the cinema before the Lumières and Le Prince is next to Lumière. He's recognized among the scholars.*

*CH I think Edison has a lot to do with us not recognizing him here in the US.*

*LC He [Edison] is suspected to be the guy who paid to kill him. This guy, his record is he registered his patent in the USA before Edison's kinetoscope. Edison made billions by having the rights on film cameras. But Le Prince was going to go back to the USA to show the tribunal his US patent which was before Edison's. So, a theory—it's just a theory—says that Edison was the guy who paid for him to be killed.*

*CH [Edison] was known as being a ruthless businessman.*

*LC Yes, he was very ruthless. That's why the producers left New York and went to California to stay away from Edison because he had the police on his part.*

*CH The film is a fun way to explore that neglected part of history.*

*LC Yes, I had a lot of fun mixing the reality with the fantasy.*

*CH How has the film been received by those who've had a chance to see it at festivals?*

*LC In late April, a longer, unfinished version was shown first at the Bruxelles Film Festival in Belgium and then also at Fantaspoa in Porto Alegre (Brazil), with mixed reactions. This convinced me to recut some sections of the movie and also to shorten it about 20 minutes, thus making it much more direct. This new **Blood's** definitive and shortened cut opened the Fantafestival here in Rome on July the 13th and I was amazed by how much all in the crowded audience liked it: people laughed and thrilled at the right moments and even clapped several times during the showing. In the following days also many reviews appeared, all of them being very positive. Never before during my career had I received so many compliments: I've been really very, very surprised. And obviously this is going to be the final version of my movie, the one you'll see here in the US too.*

*CH Obviously Méliès' **A Voyage to the Moon** was an influence, but what other cinematic works inspired the story?*

*LC Aside from Méliès, my movie mixes what I like best in genre cinema: horror, giallo, science fiction, fantasy, mystery, thriller, plus comedy. A lot of comedy and humor.*

*CH For those of us who've never visited Rome, tell us about the Profondo Rosso store that you operate with your partner Dario Argento, featured prominently in the film.*

*LC Profondo Rosso means “Deep Red” in Italian: that's the title of Dario Argento's most popular movie here in Italy, and it was Dario himself who had the idea, back in early 1989, to open this store in central Rome completely dedicated to horror, giallo, fantasy and science fiction cinema. It was a very daring move to do in 1989—a risky business decision—but it has worked well since its very start. Maybe because Profondo Rosso is more than just a store where you can buy genre-related DVDs, Blu-rays, books, masks, costumes, action figures and movie posters: actually it is also a meeting point for fans from all over the world, where fans can come, discuss and talk freely with me and, sometimes, even with Dario. Because me and Dario are as fond of the genre as the fans are! And in addition to this, Profondo Rosso's dungeons host “Dario Argento's Museum of Horrors,” an exhibition of original props from Dario and my movies, which every fan can visit: more than 100,000 visitors so far, including cinema personalities like Tim Burton, Tom Savini, Barbara Crampton, Rob Zombie, Alice Cooper and on.*

*CH Has Italy finally embraced the legacy of its forebears like Bava and Argento? Has Italian horror cinema gained any respect over the dec-*



Luigi Cozzi contemplates his new lunar landing.

*ades or is there still a stigma attached to genre work?*

*LC Here in Italy, since the 1990s, there've been some young generations of critics who've started to praise Italian 1970s and 1980s genre movies, but now all of these movies have disappeared from our TV circuits, which show in prime time only blockbusters, mostly American or local comedies. Even Dario Argento's movies are no more shown until after midnight—so the new generations are left only with the DVD/Blu-ray markets to catch up with them.*

*CH You're being recognized with the Samuel Fuller Award from the Shawna Shea Memorial Film Festival here in the US this fall. What does that mean to you as an artist?*

*LC It's a great honor for me to receive the Samuel Fuller Award and I do really appreciate it. As a matter of fact, Samuel Fuller has always been one of my preferred American directors, since as a very young kid I saw in a theater his **Hell and High Water**, which really excited and scared me! And later on among my all-time preferred movies I've always listed his **Run of the Arrow**, **The Crimson Kimono**, **The Naked Kiss** and **Shock Corridor**.*

*CH Are you planning to do any more film work in the near future? What other projects do you have in store for us?*

*LC I've not an already set project in my near future as a filmmaker. I'm working on a few ideas, but so far haven't found or shaped up a totally convincing one. And it takes time to find which one may be the right one. But, being totally independent, that's not a problem: I can wait till I discover or find it! ☺*

# BEST OF THE FESTS: 2016 BUSAN INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

By Joseph Perry  
& Chris Weatherspoon

**SOUTH KOREA'S BUSAN** International Film Festival (BIFF) was plagued for months by controversy, and many people wondered if the 21st edition would take place at all. BIFF's troubles stem from the very close relationship between the city of Busan (which provides 50% of BIFF's budget) and the festival. In 2014, BIFF screened a politically controversial documentary about the Sewol Ferry tragedy against the Busan mayor's wishes. The following year, the mayor slashed the festival's budget; many believed this action was in retaliation for screening the documentary. Artists saw this as censorship and soon an international campaign was launched to show support for BIFF and demand that the festival have more autonomy. Fortunately, everything was worked out in time and Asia's largest film festival proceeded as scheduled from October 6-15, with several intriguing genre films on offer.

**Joseph Perry:** Though BIFF was light on horror fare this year, it offered many thrillers from around the world, such as Rodrigo Sorogoyen's jolting Spanish crime film **May God Save Us**. Set in Summer 2011 Madrid, just before the Pope's visit there, the film stars Roberto Alamo as Alfaro, a violence-prone cop with anger problems, and Antonio de la Torre as his stuttering, gifted partner Velarde, who has psychological issues of his own. The pair investigates a series of rapes and murders that claim elderly women as the victims. The duo is hindered by the fact that the department is keeping the crimes quiet so as not to put a damper on the papal visit. Situations in the pair's personal lives escalate as the body count increases, and Sorogoyen keeps the tension high right up to the film's unexpected climax. Alejandro de Pablo's magnificent cinematography is as stunning as the subject matter is harrowing. Sorogoyen co-wrote the gritty screenplay with Isabel Pena. Alfaro and de la Torre give phenomenal performances. **May God Save Us** is one of the best suspense films of the year.

Another top-shelf thriller is writer/director Fin Edquist's Australian nailbiter **Bad Girl**. Young Amy (Sarah West) and her adoptive parents have just moved to the countryside; after a failed attempt at escaping her new home with old friends and then a flirtation

with suicide, Amy is rescued by fellow teen Chloe (Samara Weaving), who has been hired on as the family's housekeeper. The two girls begin a relationship that sees Chloe try to help Amy find her birth parents, while Amy steals a car against Chloe's wishes. Amy begins flirting with Chloe and the two form a bond that leads to deadly consequences and a fair amount of surprises. The less learned about **Bad Girl** before viewing, the better. On that note, I would advise readers to avoid the spoiler-laden trailers. The supporting cast is solid, but this film belongs to the young leads: Weaving gives an audacious, star-making performance, while West impresses greatly as well. Edquist's screenplay and direction keep things running tightly and smoothly with dialogue that feels real and character arcs that earn their payoffs.

**Chris Weatherspoon:** Director Ben Young's feature film debut **Hounds of Love** is another Australian thriller. This one is a slow burn that harkens back to a time when the world was more innocent—or at least seemed that way. It's the 1987 Christmas holiday season and couple John and Evelyn White (Stephen Curry, Emma Booth) are cruising the streets of Perth, looking for a young girl to bring home. Unbeknownst to their next victim, these two are sociopathic serial killers who have just recently finished sexually abusing and murdering a high school girl. The local community has actually had a rash of young-girl disappearances but the police find the idea of a serial killer living amongst them impossible. It's Perth, not New York City. John and Evelyn eventually come across high school student Vicki Maloney (Ashleigh Cummings), your seemingly average teenager, who has just snuck out of the house and is headed to meet her friends at a party. In a wonderfully suspenseful scene, they convince her to come home with them by offering to sell her some weed, and from there the horrors begin. Vicki is chained inside their home and mentally and physically abused. The situation seems hopeless but Vicki is smart. She sees the weakness in Evelyn and begins to manipulate the couple while she buys some time, hoping to escape. Vicki's disappearance doesn't go unnoticed and her mother Maggie (Susie Porter) works to uncover her daughter's whereabouts. Unfortunately, the Whites don't keep their playthings for long, and soon it becomes a race against time as Vicki hopes to flee or be saved before the twisted duo tires of her. Young shows a lot of restraint in this film with long stretches void of action. He uses tension to an almost unbearable degree to heighten audience interest, and when the suspenseful moments come, they're truly heart-pounding. The scariest part is that Vicki's dire



Potential victim seeks escape in Korean chiller **The Wailing**.

situation is completely believable, and as the film moves from thriller to horror territory, some of the most frightening and traumatic moments happen off camera. **Hounds of Love** is a smart, layered psychological thriller that will reward patient viewers.

Kim Jee-woon's latest South Korean effort **The Age of Shadows** (Korean title **Mil-jeong**) is a spy thriller set in the 1920s during Japan's occupation of the Korean peninsula. Lee Jung-chool (Song Kang-ho) is a Korean-born citizen serving as a captain in the police force established by the Japanese. Captain Lee is tasked with uncovering a network of spies working with the Korean resistance. He befriends antique shop owner and rumored resistance spy Kim Woo-jin (Gong Yoo) and slowly works his way into the movement, where he develops a bond with the other spies. Unfortunately for Lee, he is being closely watched by Japanese agent Hashimoto (Um Tae-goo), who begins to suspect that Lee might have turned. Hashimoto investigates with an almost sociopathic fervor as Captain Lee tries to stay one step ahead. There seems to be almost nothing that Hashimoto won't do to stop the resistance; this film does not shy away from the subject matter of torture or cruelty that Koreans may have encountered during the Japanese occupation. **The Age of Shadows** is Warner Bros.' first Korean-language film and will serve as South Korea's submission to the Academy Awards' Best Foreign Film category. The film's production values are of the highest quality, with lavish set pieces, beautiful period costumes, and a multitude of international settings. Lead actor Song Kang-ho does a fantastic job of juggling allegiances as the morally gray yet sympathetic Captain Lee. Overall, this cat-and-mouse spy thriller is quite engaging.



**JP:** Two very different South Korean horror films dealing with exorcism were on tap at BIFF. Writer/director Jin (**The Chaser**, **The Yellow Sea**) NaHong scores high marks for his supernatural shocker **The Wailing**, the tale of a rural village visited by madness and murder. Bumbling policeman JonGoo (Kwan DoWan) finds himself suddenly immersed in a rash of family homicides in his previously quiet bucolic area. Theories about mushrooms causing the seeming insanity of the perpetrators gives way to xenophobic suspicions about a Japanese stranger (Kunimura Jun)—alleged by some to be a wild man who feasts on the raw meat of local wildlife—who lives in the deep forest. A young woman (Chun WooHee) who first appears to be a disturbed nuisance but who later claims to have witnessed some of the killings adds a further air of mystery to the proceedings. JonGoo takes a more serious approach to his investigation when his young daughter (Kim HwanHee in a brilliant performance) shows signs of highly unusual behavior and then physical symptoms that match those of previous killers. Jin delivers a highly entertaining, adeptly acted, gory but gorgeous-looking mash-up of different horror styles that holds its eerie allure until the very end. Many elements are left open to interpretation; this fact may please as many viewers as it frustrates. Though **The Wailing** has a running time of more than two-and-a-half hours, it never wears out its welcome because of Jin's solid direction and surprise-filled screenplay.

The other South Korean exorcism-themed horror film is writer/director Jang JaeHyun's **The Priests**, originally released last year, before **The Wailing**. Whereas **The Wailing** concerns traditional Korean shamanism, this offering is likely the first Korean film foray into Roman Catholic exorcism. **The Priests** offers little new to the exorcism subgenre other than that fact, though that cultural mash-up may prove enough to attract some curious viewers. Father Kim (Kim Yoon-Seok) is chastised by fellow clergymen (of course) for performing exorcisms on high school student YoungShin (Park SoDam). Conflicted seminary student Deacon Choi (Kang DongWan) is assigned by his superiors to be the next in a long line of assistants to Father Kim, with instructions to report anything that might discredit Kim. The story will prove to be fairly predictable to anyone who has seen **The Exorcist**, but the actors do a commendable job even when saddled with clichéd characters or corny moments. Park stands out in a fearless, chilling performance as the possessed victim. **The Priests**—retitled **The Priests: Exorcism** for its U.S. release—is uneven due to its many tonal shifts, from conspiracy drama to horror to action to melodrama, and is rather tame in the scare and gore departments, but fans of Asian horror and possession films could do much worse.

**CW:** What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his soul? That question is answered in the German fantasy film **Heart of Stone**. Also known as **The Cold Heart** (*Das kalte Herz*), the film is based on 19th century German writer Wilhelm Hauff's fairy tale of the same name. A story about class as much as it is about love, **Heart of Stone** takes place in the German Black Forest, where Peter Munk (Frederick Lau), a poor boy from a family of charcoal sellers, falls in love with Lisbeth (Henriette Confurius), a girl from a wealthy family of glassblowers. Lisbeth's cruel-hearted father Löbl (Sebastian Bloberg) won't allow his daughter to associate with a lowly coal worker, much less marry one. Fortunately, Peter crosses paths with a kind forest spirit who grants him three wishes. When Peter foolishly wastes these wishes, he approaches a much more sinister forest spirit, the demon Dutch Michael, who offers Peter wealth at the price of his own heart, which is replaced with stone. Peter now has the wealth he needs to marry Lisbeth, but not the heart to love. German director Johannes Naber has done a fine job translating the vintage tale into a beautiful, high-concept fantasy film, while cinematographer Pascal Schmit splendidly captures the magic and life of the lush Black Forest and its citizens. At 119 minutes, **Heart of Stone** is definitely a commitment, but it is a masterfully crafted film layered with relevant social commentary and should not be missed.

**The Suffering of Ninko** (also titled **Ninko's Suffering**—Japanese title **Ninko no Junan**) is the feature film debut of Japanese director Norihoro Iwatsukino. Based on an old Japanese tale, the film centers around eponymous Buddhist monk Ninko (Masato Tsujioka). Ninko's diligent, disciplined nature makes him a model monk but unfortunately he has one problem: women find him absolutely irresistible. Whenever Ninko visits a town, women succumb to a sexual frenzy and chase after the innocent, handsome young monk. Ninko's power of sexual attraction is so strong that even some men lust after him. As Buddhism considers sex unclean, Ninko finds himself having to resist not only the temptation of topless women but of impure thoughts as well. Ninko's growing fame begins to create problems and eventually he is compelled to leave his temple and journey alone. While in the woods, Ninko is haunted by a beautiful witch. He fights to keep his mind pure while being constantly assaulted by sexual visions and he gradually begins to descend into madness. He meets a ronin warrior (Hideta Iwaishi) who offers to aid him in killing the succubus, which Ninko hopes will also ultimately help him extinguish his growing sexual desires. Though produced on a small budget (the film was partially completed with help from crowd-funding), **The Suffering of Ninko** is well crafted, especially considering its period setting in Edo Japan. Iwatsukino, origi-



nally an animator, uses the full gamut of his storytelling talents, often employing trippy visuals in addition to simple animation and traditional Japanese art. Masato Tsujioka also does an excellent job of portraying the virtuous, conflicted Ninko. Though **The Suffering of Ninko** may sound like a softcore erotic film, it is actually a clever tale about the suppression of sexual desire and the power of free will, guilt, and human nature. It looks like Iwatsukino has a promising future ahead.

Among the other genre films featured at BIFF were **Shin-Gozilla** (Japan), director Adam Wingard's **Blair Witch** (USA), the Indonesian actioner **Headshot**, the UK zombie story **The Girl With All the Gifts**, and director Greg Kwedar's U.S. border thriller **Transpecos**. In addition to BIFF's various specialty programs—including the popular all-night screenings of triple-bill genre fare, "Midnight Passion"—the fest also offered a spotlight section devoted to Colombian cinema and a retrospective on Iranian filmmaker Abbas Kiarostami, who passed away in July, 2016.

BIFF got off to a difficult start with Typhoon Chaba hitting the coast of Busan the day before the festival opened. Though organizers were lucky that they avoided the typhoon on their opening night, there was still a casualty: the festival's "BIFF Village" beach site was destroyed. Because of this and the other drama surrounding BIFF, the festival definitely had a subdued mood this year. With almost 300 films from 69 countries available during BIFF's 10-day run, however, cinephiles and festival-goers still got their fix of the latest offerings from international filmmakers. ☘

## BEST OF THE FESTS: SCREAM QUEEN FILMFEST TOKYO By Joseph Perry

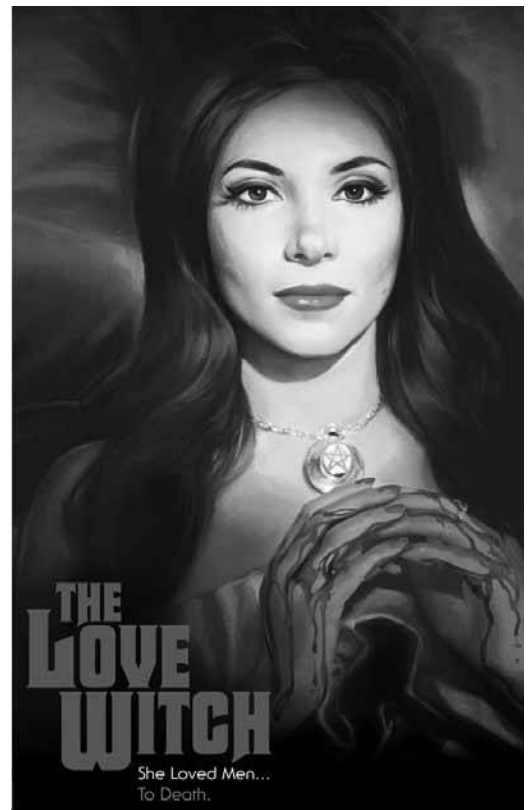
Scream Queen FilmFest Tokyo (SQFFT) held its 2016 edition at Uplink Factory in the city's Shibuya district from October 22-28. Celebrating its fourth year as the only female-centric genre-film festival in Asia, SQFFT supports underrepresented creative voices of women genre filmmakers from around the world, promoting and showcasing their work. SQFFT founder and programmer Mai Nakanishi selected a fine group of official entries, from feature films to shorts.

SQFFT's opening night selection reps a strong front-runner for my favorite film of 2016, regardless of genre: auteur Anna (Viva [VS #70]) Biller's **The Love Witch** (USA, 2016), the story of Elaine, a beautiful young witch who becomes a serial killer in her quest for the perfect love. The film is a true work of art and labor of love. Biller not only produced, wrote, directed and edited, she also made props (including paintings and a hand-hooked pentagram rug) and costumes (Renaissance finery and Elaine's wardrobe) and composed period music for the score. Shot on 35mm, **The Love Witch** faithfully re-creates the vibe of 1960s and 1970s Technicolor thrillers, occult horror films, and European sex comedies. Elaine (Samantha Robinson in a captivating, truly star-making performance) leaves San Francisco and the memory of her dead ex-husband behind for a change of scenery in Eureka, California. Her new landlady Trish (Laura Waddell) considers Elaine's old-fashioned ideas on the politics of love a bit quaint, to say the least, and their initial conversation about the topic in a gorgeous pink tea room is merely one of the film's many sumptuously rendered scenes. Elaine learns that a local coven is more in tune with her thoughts about love and sexuality. She makes brews and potions and casts

spells on some of the local men, who find themselves overwhelmed by an emotional depth they had never felt before, which leads to their demise. Elaine eventually sets her sights on Griff (Gian Keys), one of the policemen investigating the murders. Biller and her cast play the story straight throughout, keeping things from falling into camp territory. She blends a strong feminist statement with sheer entertainment. **The Love Witch** is a cinematic treasure chest and the most unique motion picture experience in recent memory.

Writer/director/producer Rebekah Fieschi's short horror-comedy film **Mauvaises Têtes** (**Bad Heads**) (France/USA, 2015) will have great appeal to fans of vintage Universal and MGM horror movies. Fieschi uses black-and-white cinematography and practical special effects to tell the tale of lonelyheart bartender Jenny (Alice Dessuant in a delightful turn that allows her to stretch from charming and humorous to psychopathic), whose mind is more on daydreams of multiple suitors than work. Jenny dons flapper threads and goes out man-hunting in several senses of the word. Other than an introduction by a dapper host (Diako Diakoff), Fieschi's script uses dialogue sparingly; therefore, Dessuant's performance is driven by her captivating command of facial expressions and body language. Fieschi creates an authentic-feeling Roaring Twenties atmosphere, with fantastic set designs both interior (the wallpaper in Jenny's bedsit is spot-on) and exterior, highlighted by a stormy cemetery scene. **Mauvaises Têtes** delivers chills along with laughs and nostalgia.

Director Prano Bailey-Bond's thrilling horror short **Nasty** (UK, 2015) offers up nostalgia for a different era: the days of the United Kingdom's 1980s "video nasties," when many horror movies on videotape were censured by the press and religious organizations and often heavily censored by local jurisdictions due to what was deemed extreme content. Young Doug (Albie Marber) awakens one morning to find that his mother Carol (Madelienne Hutchins) can't find his father (James Cutler). News reports mention a sudden wave of missing locals and the possibility of a link between the disappearances and the purveyor of a video shop. After unearthing his father's hidden stash of video nasties in the garage, Doug becomes fascinated with them, while Carol is repulsed, but the boy finds that the movies may lead to learning the truth about his father's disappearance. Marber plays Doug with a believable blend of dubiety and determination, while Hutchins skillfully conveys the anguish and grief of a distressed wife and mother. Director Bailey-Bond, working from a screenplay by Anthony Fletcher, captures the drama of a family falling apart, making **Nasty**'s horror truly meaningful. Visual effects, sound design, and some gruesome surprises provide an authentic feeling of the video-nasty viewing experience without wandering into parody territory.



Writer/director Jacqueline Castel's **The Puppet Man** (USA, 2016) isn't shy about flaunting its influences. As a matter of fact, if its synthesizer score sounds much like a John Carpenter track, that's because it is. The legendary director also contributes a cameo appearance as a character, and his influence is evident elsewhere, as is Dario Argento's in the film's array of lurid colors and knife-wielding baddies. Castel still manages to put her own stamp on this eight-minute ode to neon-hued dread and menace. Four young people happen upon a seedy bar on a quiet city street, where they encounter a creepy barkeep (Bradley Bailey). Alpha male Tommy (Joe Castle Baker) ignores the barkeep's assertions that the establishment is closed and bribes him to stay open. Trippy Susie (Susannah Simpson) and silent but unsettling Frank (Grant Mayland) instantly start in on the drinks, while uncomfortable Christine (Crystal Renn in an outstanding turn as a flummoxed potential victim) heads for the ladies' room. The bartender tells the group about the Puppet Man, who "comes to visit you when you're bad," and then summons the blade-bearing titular character (Johnny Scuotto, who also receives a "based on a character by" credit) by playing Bob Morrison's garage rocker "Hey Puppet Man" on the jukebox. All of the cast members turn in entertaining, spellbinding performances. Castel also served as director of photography and editor; she frames her shots beautifully and keeps the proceedings going at a thrilling pace. **The Puppet Man** gives birth to a new supernatural slasher character that shows lots of promise. Castel's short is certainly worthy of being developed into a feature film with this talented filmmaker at the helm.



Jeanne Jo's horror-comedy short **Tampon** (USA, 2015) gets viewers to groan and grin, sometimes simultaneously, at a tale of three characters: Miranda (Alexandra August), her date Sean (J.J. Dunlap)...and a possessed tampon (!). Close-up shots of routine female grooming become squirm-inducing as Miranda readies for Sean's arrival so they can attend a party. The guy is a boor and a slob, and he makes it instantly clear that he would much rather stay in and have sex than go anywhere. He continues to lose points in the charm department when he answers a question unfavorably, and after Miranda decides on a compromise, she attempts to pull out her tampon, which seems to have a will of its own. August shows off bubbly comic chops, while Dunlap plays his loser character believably without going overboard. Jo exhibits a keen eye for visuals and pacing, directing from a screenplay she co-wrote with Nicholas Musurca.

I use the term Hitchcockian sparingly, but when a thriller as excellent as the Chinese short film **Fish Eye** (2015) comes along, I'm happy to make such a comparison. Director Tong Zhou expertly weaves a story of ever-escalating paranoia and dread. Shasha (Yuti Sun) is a young country woman who has relocated to Beijing to work as a maid. On the bus ride to her first day of work she is alarmed by a fellow passenger's talk of a serial killer in their area. Her uneasiness isn't abated when homeowner Mr. Wang (Liangbo Wang) behaves rather oddly, and her fear of his pet cat doesn't help matters. Shasha finds a towel with blood on it, along with other items that amplify her foreboding. After going back to her bus stop, she discovers that she left an item behind and enters the house unannounced to retrieve it. Zhou cranks up the suspense at this point, working from a screenplay she co-wrote with Jackie Jiahao Hou (from a story by Hou), building to a spellbinding climax. Sun imbues the naive Sasha with a frail vulnerability and an emotional distance. Liangbo Wang portrays Mr. Wang with a delicate balance, keeping viewers initially unsure whether he is a mere eccentric or a murderous madman. Though some dark humor is part of **Fish Eye's** bag of tricks, the short never delves into full-on comedy, even in its wraparound featuring the philosophical musings of a fish. Zhou's film looks elegant, thanks to Dezhong Feng's production design and Ray Changxin Chen's gorgeous cinematography.

SQFFT has annual tour stops throughout Japan, but the festival also celebrated its first international expansion in 2016 with a Singapore stop from October 28-30. **The Love Witch** screened along with the seven shorts shown in Tokyo, and an additional 13 shorts were added. Here's wishing for continued growth and success to Mai Nakanishi and the incredible SQFFT. ☘

## NASHVILLE NIGHTMARES: 12 HOURS OF TERROR! By Rob Freese

After being shut down for more than half the year for renovations, Nashville's Belcourt Theatre finally re-opened in August, just in time to premier **Absolutely Fabulous: The Movie** as its first new feature. The lobby and bathrooms were completely overhauled, adding much-needed space. A third screen and classroom were added upstairs to further the Belcourt's ever-diligent explorations into the cinematic arts. They returned with an aggressive and impressive slate of new releases as well as repertory and midnight movie offerings (including a look at the work of Brian De Palma, showings of **Phantasm: Ravager** and a new live Rifftrax show), all building up to their 2016 **12 Hours of Terror** Halloween celebration!

Once again, they revealed the titles of only a handful of movies, keeping most of the entries a surprise until showtime. Upon entering 1966 Hall, we found seats while the Boo Dudes rocked out with their "special" brand of rock 'n' roll. The theater was missing the back section of seating, making it a bit smaller, but the crowd was into the music and there was a great excitement in the air. When the music died down, the lights dimmed and the screen flickered to life. A wonderfully faded 35mm copy of **The Howling** had everyone screaming and carrying on for the next 90 minutes. It was amazing to see how this movie still had the young folks jumping in their seats, screaming and laughing throughout. The worst damage to the red and tattered print was the omission of Elizabeth Brooks' full frontal campfire seduction scene (!).

Nothing could have prepared us for the second feature, the Indonesian black magic geekshow **Mystics of Bali**. The money shot in this one is a black magic priestess possessing an American coed's body, and flying her head around with the spinal column and a bunch of guts trailing behind. (In a stroke of pure brilliant showmanship, a kid with a gut-dripping head on a stick ran out into the audience to slap everyone with some latex intestines every time the flying head appeared on screen.)

Thom Eberhardt's 1983 thriller **Sole Survivor** unspooled next. Anita Skinner survives a plane crash but soon death is sending zombies after her to bring her over to the "other side" in this precursor to the **Final Destination** flicks. The 4k restoration of **Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer** brought the hi-jinks down a notch. Nothing fun about this depressing psycho-fest, although before the movie started, Nashville horror host Dr. Gangrene (aka Larry Underwood) officiated a Draw a Portrait of the Portrait of a Serial Killer



contest in which three contestants quickly sketched three outrageously different interpretations of Michael Rooker's eponymous character.

Anaglyph (red/cyan) 3-D glasses were handed out for the next feature, the 1961 Canadian chiller **The Mask**. This one has its fans and the nightmare sequences are pretty wild, but I'm spoiled by modern 3-D and grew frustrated with both the anaglyph process and the bossy narrator constantly waking me from my bouts of "eye resting" with his bellowing, "Put the mask on now!"

Amazingly, creeping up around five a.m., most of the viewers were still planted in their seats! Brave souls all, they were treated to the demented killer psychic teddy bear monster movie **The Pit**, where a horny pre-teen creepozoid peeps on his teachers and feeds his enemies to some troglodytes he'd found in a pit. His teddy bear tells him what to do. This is pretty funny stuff when you're coming up on hour 20 of the day and you've had nothing but sodas, candy and popcorn for the previous eight hours.

Finally, the frights and chills wrapped up with Stuart Gordon's classy 1986 adaptation of the H.P. Lovecraft-inspired **From Beyond**. Seeing this flick for the first time on the big screen was an amazing experience. To feast on all those wonderful Mark Shostrom special effects was to be transported back to the wild and crazy '80s, when movie dreams (and nightmares) flourished.

Like vampires, we survivors filed out into the unforgiving sunlight. Collectively, we'd slain the celluloid beast, conquering another 12 Hours of Terror! When in Nashville, don't forget to visit The Belcourt ([www.belcourt.org](http://www.belcourt.org)). ☘



## VINEGAR SYNDROME: KEEPING EXPLOITATION ALIVE!

*As Told To  
Don Vaughan*

Companies dedicated to film restoration and preservation have saved countless movies from oblivion over the years. Connecticut-based Vinegar Syndrome focuses specifically on horror, exploitation and classic erotica, a model that has made it a particular favorite among grindhouse fans. **VideoScope** spoke with Ryan Emerson, co-founder and director of production, and Brandon Upson, lead restoration artist, about the company's unique mission, the hard work that goes into restoring long-forgotten genre films, and their fave exploitation flicks.

—DV

**DON VAUGHAN** *Let's start with the name of your company. For those who may not know, please explain what vinegar syndrome is.*

**RYAN EMERSON** I come from a motion picture film background out of Chicago, along with the other founder, Joe Rubin. We met in Chicago on a restoration project. So I knew about vinegar syndrome as a film problem for quite a while. I have been dealing with vinegar syndrome my whole career, and it is a very negative thing. It is basically a chemical reaction that deteriorates film over time if it is stored improperly. So when we launched the company almost five years ago, I figured that Vinegar Syndrome would be a great name to choose. It's a negative thing but it's something that we're fighting against every day and it's kind of good to remind ourselves what's at stake, and that these films can deteriorate over time and we have to get to them before that happens.

**DV** *What is the mission of your company?*

**RE** To seek out films that haven't been found yet and to preserve films that aren't currently being preserved and to do the job that no one else is willing to do at this point.

**DV** *Vinegar Syndrome specializes in the restoration and distribution of exploitation movies. How do you define an exploitation movie in the context of your company's mission? What kinds of films are you trying to save and make available to the public?*

**BRANDON UPSON** These are films that were usually shot in a matter of days on very low budgets. You have the term grindhouse, where you had these big theaters that would play these movies and rotate them every other day or every week. These were the

types of films that weren't necessarily made for artistic merit, but it was often discovered later that these films really did have artistic merit. These films were ground out as fast as possible to make a buck but were also left on the trash heap of history and forgotten about. Aside from silent films, exploitation is pretty much the second most lost film genre.

They say that 90 percent of all silent films are lost, and with exploitation films, it's probably around 50 percent at this point.

**RE** One of the interesting things we have noticed over time is that quite a significant percentage of the films we work on, we spend more time restoring these films than went into the actual production. We restore films that were shot over a weekend and we spend a week or two restoring these things. It's crazy.

**BU** These were films where if an actor flubbed a line or something else went wrong, they wouldn't do a retake. And there is a very good chance they were shooting on what's called short ends, which are the short parts of reels from bigger-budgeted films. On bigger-budgeted films, shooting on 35mm, when they realized they had about two minutes left on a reel, they would just switch the reel. A low-budget film would just take those short ends and shoot until they were done.

**DV** *How many titles have you restored and re-leased to date?*

**RE** Hundreds. We have restored films that haven't been released yet. Over the past couple of years we have done an enormous amount of work. It's literally over 400 films so far. We have approximately 150 home-video releases that we have done, and a lot of those are double features. Some are triple features. But 150 releases and more than 400 films restored.

**DV** *Where do you obtain the 35mm and 16mm films you restore? Many of the titles are extremely rare.*

**RE** We have a number of different ways to acquire films. We own the rights to several hundred feature films, so obviously those films are stored in our warehouse. We have license deals with a number of filmmakers, companies, organizations, etc., and we're out there every day looking for new collections, for films that are lost.

**DV** *Are there certain titles that you really would like to be involved in but haven't found a good enough print yet?*

**BU** An example of a film that everyone assumes is lost is the Warner Bros. film **The Devils**. I would love for that to see the light of day. What's cool about **The Devils** is it's basically a



big-budgeted exploitation film made by a major studio. It has a lot of art-house stuff in it, but it's still an exploitation film. We have similar films that we want to get, but a lot of times we will contract the rights-holder and they are willing to do a license but they don't have access to the film materials. So we have to go on our own to locate them. That can be very difficult. Sometimes there is some detective work involved.

**DV** *To what degree do you clean up the movies you distribute? What are the parameters for restoration?*

**BU** Well, to start off, when we receive a new film, first we see what elements we actually have. Whenever possible, we want the actual camera negative for the 35mm or 16mm A and B rolls. Those are the best possible picture elements. Then we inspect to see if the film has vinegar syndrome on it. If there is a little bit, it's usually okay, but if there is a lot of vinegar syndrome, it can be a problem. Some films shrink because of it, some of the colors start to fade, but we can usually rescue them in the digital workspace. So we get the film negative and it looks great and everything, then we put it on a film cleaner—we have both an alcohol film cleaner and an ultrasonic film cleaner which is used for the dirtier prints. When a film has mold on it, that's when we would have to very gently hand-clean it. That's something that happened with the mag tracks for our release of **Catch My Soul**. It had mold on it, so we slowly cleaned it off without scratching it over a period of five 10-hour days. We got it cleaned and sounding perfect. Once we clean a film, it's put on the film scanner. We scan it 2K or 4K and from there we do the digital restoration and the digital coloring.

**“Any film that was shot deserves to be preserved and made accessible for current and future generations.”**

**Ryan Emerson**

*DV What is the average time you would spend restoring a motion picture?*

*RE* There are two sides to restoration: the physical side and the digital side. Our home-video customers see only the digital side, but the physical restoration is just as important with our archives here in Connecticut. Humidity control, temperature control, the cataloging, knowing what film elements we have—that’s just as important to us as what goes into the digital preservation of these films. The restoration is always a moving target. Literally, we could restore a film for a year and we wouldn’t be done. There are unlimited things you can do for a film, so you have to kind of have your end in sight before you begin. We tend to think of ourselves as quality over anything. One of our earlier releases, **Good Luck, Miss Wyckoff**, was a learning project for us for sure. We ended up restoring that film three times. The restorations ranged anywhere from one to two weeks, I think, so a lot of duplicate man hours were put into that restoration because we wanted it to look as good as possible. For the first restoration, we knew we could do better, and after the second restoration we knew the same thing. We didn’t stop until it was perfect.

*BU* There have been cases where we have done a full restoration on a film, spending maybe 30 or 40 hours on it, then all of a sudden we discovered the negative. Maybe it was misplaced or misnamed—that has happened on more than one occasion. And we’ll be like, okay, even with the restoration, the negative would look better, so we rescan and restore it again.

*DV What have been your best-selling titles so far? What areas of exploitation have done the best for you?*

*RE* Our current bestseller right now is a vintage adult film titled **Taboo**, starring Kay Parker, which is a Blu-ray restoration we put out a few months ago. That’s doing very well for us right now. I’m sure a lot of your readers probably have our release of **Raw Force**, which we released on Blu-ray a couple years ago. Horror does very well for us, but our classic erotica does quite well, too.

*DV What would you say is the most obscure or little-known title in your inventory?*

*BU* We just started work on a film from the early ‘80s. We can’t name the title just yet but it’s a film shot on the short ends of the major film **Lenny**. It’s just one of those films that is so out there, even for the obscure stuff that we do, that it’s crazy.

*RE* I entered this industry through the technical side of things. I had been working on film restorations long before we launched Vinegar Syndrome, so I’m by no means an expert on this genre of film. I learn more and more every day, and I’m very excited to be involved in this line of work. But there are a lot of films that come our way, and the film we were just talking about that we’re so excited to be releasing next year is a film I had no idea even existed.

*BU* You never know what’s going to come your way. But let’s say from our back catalogue, as far as obscure films, my favorite is a film called **The Telephone Book**, which is this really out there, almost Andy Warholesque sex comedy shot in 1972. It’s in stark black and white and was directed by Nelson Lyon, who was a writer for **Saturday Night Live** in the 1980s. It has a bevy of Andy Warhol actors and all these great characters as well. It’s just off the wall. It has this almost Robert Crumb-like animated sequence in the last 15 minutes of the film.

*DV We were happy to see that you’ve preserved a number of rather obscure films by Rudy Ray Moore, including **Disco Godfather** and **Petey Wheatstraw**. Can you talk about how you obtained those?*

*RE* Those films were really fun to work on. I grew up watching those films as a child, and it’s just fantastic to work on their preservation.

*BU* For the longest time, the negatives for **Dolemite** were thought to have been lost in the backseat of Moore’s car at some point. The car was stolen or something like that happened apparently, but we found the negatives in a normal archive. And it looks fantastic. That was one of the films for which we knew we had to include the incorrect 1:33 version, the full-screen version, because everyone was used to seeing that. But it’s funny because we also include the correct 1:85 version and you still see the boom mics. That’s just how the production was.

*DV You’ve also released a number of rather obscure horror and thriller titles, such as **Deathrow Game Show** and **Hobgoblins**. Why is it important that these kinds of movies be preserved?*

*RE* I have never heard of a bad film preservation—they are all good. Any film that was shot deserves to be preserved and made accessible for current and future generations. I’m a fan of all film and all film restoration. The films that we are drawn to as a company just happen to be the classic erotica and the more exploitation and



horror films. There are some films coming our way that might not fit into the current Vinegar Syndrome model, and we’re very excited to restore them and release them next year.

*DV Are there any films you wouldn’t touch? Anything that, if offered to you, you would decline?*

*BU* I would say no. I guess maybe a really well-made drama!

*RE* We are friends with a lot of the other labels and studios and sometimes we get a line on a film that might work for Vinegar Syndrome but would actually be better for another studio, and we offer it to them. If we come across a film that doesn’t really fit our mold, we’ll happily share it with another company.

*DV What goes into making the extras provided on the DVDs you produce? It seems like you put a lot of effort into these.*

*RE* I really appreciate that. The bonus features are something we are really focused on because we realize how important they are. To completely tell the story of a film, you really need to have some context to it, and whenever we can we work with the director, the actors, the technical crew that was involved with the filming—whoever we can find. We track them down and work closely with them on the release. Not only is it important for the production of featurettes and interviews and special features, it ensures that we are preserving the film the way it was intended. Especially when we are dealing with color correction and color grading, there is a lot of room for creative input and that can be a good thing and it can be a bad thing. We don’t want to make creative decisions that weren’t intended. So to have the original filmmakers around and available is the best-case scenario for us to make sure we are doing right by the preservation.

*DV* How important do you feel the extras are to your customers?

*BU* They love it. They love the interviews and the commentaries. Especially with the early '70s films that we're dealing with, it's all about finding people who are still living and can talk about them. Many of these people are getting older and to get them talking about these rare films is always a welcome treat. It's also a great learning experience. Speaking for myself as a collector, after watching a film I really love, one of the first things I do is watch it again with the audio commentary to see how these shots happened or how they were able to get this person in the film to begin with, general information like that. I think it really grabs people. A lot of people like the aesthetics of it, too. One thing we're doing a little bit more of is the booklets. People like an informational essay about the film they are watching. We've been getting a lot of compliments for one of our latest releases, **Count Dracula's Great Love**. It has the whole nine yards, including a commentary that was recorded before Paul Naschy passed away that was intended for a release that never happened. We were able to acquire that, along with commentary from the director, and we also were able to get a booklet essay. It's such a well-rounded release. We get a lot of fan appreciation for the extras.

*RE* The one thing that's always important for us to keep in mind is we're creating something tangible, something physical that people are going to hold in their hands. One of our upcoming releases that I am very excited about is our lenticular release of the 1996 horror snowman film **Jack Frost**. I remember as a kid renting the VHS in the video store and the main reason I rented it was the lenticular cover with the evil and the nice snowman kind of morphing into one another. We spent a lot of time and money re-creating the lenticular for our Blu-ray release, which is going to come out as a limited edition.

*DV* Tell us about your Drive-In Collections. What titles or genres do you focus on?

*RE* I really love our Drive-In Collections, but it's not something we have been doing a lot of lately. I'm not saying we're never going to do one again, but it hasn't recently been our priority. We have several titles in mind for the Drive-In Collections, but it's kind of a tough market for the DVD double feature these days. If we're working on a horror film or an exploitation film, chances are it's going to be a Blu-ray release.

*BU* We're getting more into the Blu-ray market, and that's kind of grabbing people at this point in time. That's just the way it's happening. That being said, there are one or two double-feature titles we would like to up-

grade to Blu-ray as well, but that doesn't mean the drive-in double feature is going away. We're going to have a couple down the road.

*DV* A large part of your inventory is vintage adult movies from the '70s and '80s. Was it a difficult decision to incorporate adult films or was that part of your plan all along?

*RE* Honestly, our first release was an adult release. So we've been an all-genre company since day one. We cross all genres and I think we'll continue to.

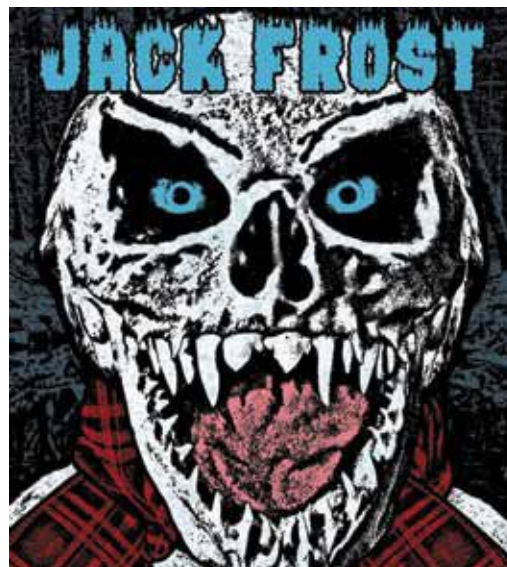
*DV* Has the classic erotica been a successful aspect of Vinegar Syndrome?

*RE* There is a huge interest in these films, and I think one of the driving forces is that they are a kind of time capsule into the 1970s and '80s. These are some of the most underground films made of that era. You get some beautiful footage of New York City back in the '70s, you get some beautiful footage of San Francisco.

*BU* This was a time when they made [adult films] like feature-length films. They were films with storylines and full production crews. The story goes that a lot of Hollywood technical people would moonlight on adult-film shoots. I know Wes Craven, in the **Deep Throat** documentary, he wouldn't name titles but he said, yeah, I got my start in the X-rated world. That's how they learned their craft. Many of these films have interesting storylines as well. That's what we're seeing with a lot of customers, too—they're buying them for the plot. It was such an interesting time period, where the border was very skewed between adult and regular films.

*DV* What are your favorite three exploitation movies from your catalogue?

*BU* Number one would be **The Telephone Book**. Number two would probably be **Raw Force**. And number three would probably be a horror film called **Pigs**. That was a crazy restoration where we re-created the director's cut, which hadn't been seen in 40 years. It was a film that had been heavily re-edited with the addition of completely new scenes that had nothing to do with the original film. At one point it was called **Love Exorcist** and it had a scene added, which makes no sense to the rest of the film. There was another version called **Daddy's Deadly Darling**, in which was added a really sleazy incest plot. Again, it had nothing to do with the film, and they shot it with a completely different actress and pretended it was the same actress from seven years before or something. To have the original director's cut was awesome. It's a cool storyline and is more cerebral and psychological. It's kind of an early prototype slasher film, too. I would call it a slasher film but it didn't know it was a slasher film at the time. It's a great film. We have an interview with composer Charles Bernstein, who would go on to create the scores for **A**



**Nightmare on Elm Street** and **Cujo**. This was the first film he scored, and he had some fond memories of it.

*RE* Number one for me would have to be **Night Train to Terror**. Second would be **Sex World**. And number three would be **The American Dreamer**, the Dennis Hopper documentary.

*DV* What is it about **Sex World** that would make it one of your top three?

*RE* Technically speaking, **Sex World** is one of the most well-shot classic erotic titles we have. It was just an awesome release to preserve.

*BU* **Sex World** is one of those films that I would recommend to someone who has no interest in erotic films. If you're going to give any of the X-rated films a shot, from any era, make it this one.

*RE* **Sex World** is the perfect entry point for classic erotica. It might be the perfect entry point for Vinegar Syndrome, actually. One of the really cool things about the movie, and I think it's the direction our company is going in general, is **Sex World** was the first 4K restoration of a classic erotica title ever. That is something that we're going to do more and more of in 2017. I just want to make sure that the focus is on the films and that quality is always number one and that we will always be pushing the envelope as far as quality goes. That's going to mean more 4K restorations and better releases, and maybe even looking at the Ultra HD format next year, too.

*DV* Any concluding thoughts?

*RE* I want to note that we make all of our titles available for theatrical release, for 2K and 4K DCP screenings. We also have a large collection of 35mm theatrical prints that we loan out. We get requests from film festivals and special screenings all the time. We do a lot of theatrical work, especially with Alamo Drafthouse. Another aspect of our company is we do preservations and restorations for other studios, too. ☿



## H.G. LEWIS: THE GODFATHER OF GORE By Don Vaughan

**LET'S BE HONEST:** Most of Herschell Gordon Lewis' movies are crap. Made on shoestring budgets using actors with the dramatic range of dime-store mannequins, they were typical of the exploitation fare that packed grindhouses and drive-ins in the 1960s and '70s.

Except that they weren't. Lewis may not have been the most talented director or screenwriter of his day, but he was very adept at identifying and capitalizing on marketable new trends, a skill that would ultimately make him one of the most influential independent filmmakers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Having learned his craft directing industrial films, Lewis made his first commercial film in 1960, a forgettable flick titled **The Prime Time**. Produced by Lewis and directed by Gordon Weisenborn, it was followed a year later by **Living Venus**, which chronicled the rise and fall of a Hugh Hefner-esque magazine publisher. Both films bombed, and Lewis, broke and broken, returned to the world of industrial filmmaking.

But not for long. Lewis was soon offered the opportunity to make his first nudie, a comedy titled **The Adventures of Lucky Pierre** (1961), with exploitation impresario David Friedman. More softcore showcases followed, including **Daughter of the Sun** (1962), **Nature's Playmates** (1962), **B-O-I-N-N-N-G!** (1962) and **Bell, Bare and Beautiful** (1963). All were fairly successful, but by the end Lewis and Friedman had seen the writing on the wall and realized that the nudie cutie was a dying genre. They needed something new.

In **Kings of the Bs: Working Within the Hollywood System**, Lewis told authors Todd McCarthy and Charles Flynn, "The only film that an independent can make and survive with is a film that the major producers cannot or will not make." With that in mind, Lewis and Friedman switched gears and turned their talents to the horror genre. But unlike traditional Hollywood horror that cut away when things turned gruesome, their films would not only show the violence but revel in it. And with that, the gore film was born.

1963's **Blood Feast** (VS #89) was the duo's first exploration of this new style of filmmaking. Lensed in Miami and featuring **Playboy** Centerfold Connie Mason in her first credited film role, **Blood Feast** is about a crazy Egyptian caterer who murders and

dismembers young women in an attempt to revive a long-dead Egyptian princess. Lewis and Friedman didn't pull any punches. In one scene, a woman's tongue is ripped out on camera. In another, limbs are chopped off with much blood spattered. It was a film unlike any other, and filmgoers and critics were shocked. But as Lewis noted in John McCarty's **The Sleaze Merchants**, "I knew as we were cutting **Blood Feast** that we had an extraordinary exploitation film on our hands."

Lewis and Friedman's second effort, a violent, Southern-set adaptation of **Brigadoon** titled **2000 Maniacs!** ([VS #35] also filmed in Florida and costarring Connie Mason), was among their most popular films—and their most polished. The filmmakers concluded their so-called "gore trilogy" with 1965's **Color Me Blood Red** (VS #35), about an artist who kills people so he can use their blood in his paint. That film also marked the end of their professional relationship, but Lewis continued to find cinematic success. Working with others, he wrote, produced and directed a long list of films through the early 1970s, a body of work that includes gore films (1967's **The Gruesome Twosome** [VS #73]), biker flicks (1968's **She-Devils on Wheels** [VS #12]) and even kiddie movies like **The Magic Land of Mother Goose** (1967).

Herschell Gordon Lewis left motion pictures to make his fortune (literally) writing books about copywriting and direct marketing. He returned in 2002 to helm a sequel to **Blood Feast** (**Blood Feast 2: All U Can Eat** [VS #47]) and again in 2009 for **The Uh-Oh! Show** (VS #82). His final film was the 2016 horror anthology Herschell Gordon Lewis' **Bloodmania** which, according to the IMDb, remains in post-production.

Lewis died September 26, 2016 at age 90. Over the course of his filmmaking career he was vilified by numerous critics who felt his films went too far and praised by others—especially in France—who thought him a visionary. But regardless of how you feel about Lewis' body of work, it cannot be denied that he influenced an entire generation of young filmmakers. Had it not been for **Blood Feast** and **2000 Maniacs!**, there might never have been a **Texas Chainsaw Massacre**, a **Last House on the Left** or the **Saw** franchise. Simply put, contemporary horror owes a huge debt to a man who felt so strongly about his craft he mixed his own stage blood because he felt the commercial stuff was "too watery."

Herschell Gordon Lewis is gone but his movies live on, entertaining and influencing a whole new generation of fans and aspiring filmmakers. He was no Cecil B. DeMille, but as he observed in **The Sleaze Merchants**: "I guess I was more of a pioneer than I realized at the time." ☿

Lewis lovers, meanwhile, will want to 'scope out Arrow Video's gala new 14-film, 17-disc (Blu-ray & DVD) bonus-packed special edition collection **The Herschell Gordon Lewis Feast**.



## MONDO GIALLO

**TENEBRAE** (1982) ☿☿☿☿

D: Dario Argento. Anthony Franciosa, John Saxon, Daria Nicolodi, John Steiner, Giuliana Gemma, Christina Borromeo. 101 mins. (Synapse Films Blu-ray \$24.95) 9/16

Horror scribe Peter Neal (Franciosa) arrives in Rome to promote his new novel of terror, **Tenebrae**. As soon as he steps off the plane, a rash of graphic murders begins, each one linked to a similar killing in his new thriller. There are numerous suspects, including an estranged wife who has followed Neal to Rome to stalk him. It doesn't take long before Neal is the target of the unknown killer; Detective Germani (Gemma) feels the author has brought most of the trouble on himself for the types of books he writes. To say more would risk spoiling some of the honest surprises **Tenebrae** offers. This is my favorite Argento thriller, as it is one of the master's most tightly constructed and linear stories. The film has some of the most shockingly vicious straight-razor and axe attacks ever committed to celluloid, capped by a terrifically twisted finale. Synapse releases **Tenebrae** a long time after the Anchor Bay DVD went out of print. The HD feature looks great, while extras include English/Italian language options with newly-translated English subtitles, audio commentary by author and Argento expert Maitland McDonagh, alternate opening credits sequence, original **Unsane** (the U.S. version of **Tenebrae**) end credits, and the feature-length **Yellow Fever: The Rise and Fall of the Giallo**, a thoroughly in-depth and entertaining documentary about the Italian thriller genre. Synapse also offers a limited edition Steelbook 3-disc set that includes a DVD and 19-track CD soundtrack. (Don't be too quick to trade in your old copy of the Anchor Bay disc, though, as that edition has different special features, including a running commentary by the master himself joined by composer Claudio Simonetti and journalist Loris Curei.) A solid, intense shocker that should not be missed. ☿

—Rob Freese

## Rob Freese's VINTAGE SCARE FARE

KINO LORBER

(\$29.95 Blu-ray, \$19.95 DVD each) 9/16

**BEWARE! THE BLOB** (1972) ♂♂♂

D: Larry Hagman. Robert Walker, Jr., Gwynne Gilford, Richard Stahl, Richard Webb, Godfrey Cambridge. 91 mins.

Cambridge is Chester Hargis, a worker home from a long stint on the Alaskan pipeline. In his desire to drink beer and get back to the outdoors (via a tent he has set up close to his TV and beer cooler in the front room), he forgets about the frozen sample of goo he found digging in Alaska and that now rests in a container on the kitchen cabinet. When the goo thaws, it comes to lethal life, gaining strength first by eating a housefly ("Help me!"), then a kitten. Before you can scream "Beware!" Chester is eaten in his La-Z-Boy while watching the original **Blob** on the late show, and soon teen couple Bobby Hartford (Walker, Jr.) and Lisa Clark (Gilford) is trying to convince authority types that the town is in danger from a growing glob of deadly jelly. With tongue firmly in cheek, Hagman delivers a very funny monster-amok flick. Producer Jack Harris showed neighbor Hagman the original Steve McQueen classic, and Hagman had such a good time with it they put together this sequel of sorts (hence the alternate title **Son of Blob**), which does share continuity with the original. The cast is obviously having fun, and familiar faces like Shelly Berman, Carol Lynley, Marlene Clark, Gerrit Graham, Dick Van Patten and Cindy Williams pop up along the way. Hagman shares a short scene as a hobo with Burgess Meredith and Del Close, who went on to essay the role of Reverend Meeker in the 1988 **Blob** remake. Extras include a commentary by film historian Richard Harland Smith, an alternate title sequence and a trailer gallery. This is a solid low-budget drive-in effort that makes for ideal late-night viewing.

SCORPION RELEASING

(\$29.95 Blu-ray)

**THE RIFT** (1989) ♂♂♂

D: Juan Piquer Simon. Jack Scalia, R. Lee Ermey, Ray Wise, Deborah Adair, John Toles-Bey, Edmund Purdom. 82 mins.

The military orders troublemaking submarine designer Wick Hayes (Scalia) to escort the crew of the Siren 2 on a rescue mission for Siren 1, the ship he designed. Among the international crew are Lt. Nina Crowley (Adair), Wick's estranged wife, hardcore Captain Phillips (Ermey), a hotheaded Navy lifer who barks his every line of dialogue and does not like Wick's long hair, and wormy



scientist Robbins (Wise), who stays close to the Captain. When Siren 1 is found near an underground cave, the rescue team discovers a DNA accelerator running wild, mixing DNA from plant and sea life and creating all kinds of ugly monstroids hungry for human flesh. There's a whole big battle with the creatures, followed by some double crosses and character revelations. Then it's "T Minus 5" time, with the self-destruction of the monster-filled Siren 2 ticking down and the final survivors fighting for the last escape ship. Simon's flick arrived at the end of the underwater monster cycle that started with **The Abyss** and went on to include **Deepstar Six**, **Leviathan** and Roger Corman's **Lords of the Deep**. Simon succeeds in delivering what is probably the most enjoyable of the bunch. With a lean, fast-moving 82-minute runtime and without a lot of money to waste on stuff like sets, costumes and props, Simon gets down and dirty with special effects and ladles on the gore. (There's a picture of one monster on the back cover that looks like a giant gooey brain with a vagina for a mouth.) It's obvious that no one is taking this very seriously (one minor character is named Jake Plissken), but also obvious all were having a good time. **The Rift** was issued on VHS in 1990, the year most reference books use for the film's release date, as **Endless Descent**. 2016 saw an HD resurgence in J.P.'s outrageous output, with **Pieces** (VS #98) receiving a lavish deluxe Blu-ray special edition via Grindhouse Releasing early in the year and Arrow Video offering a special edition of the equally amazing **Slugs**. Extras include on-camera interviews with Wise, Scalia and Ermey, and a reversible cover with the **Endless Descent** artwork for the purists among us. Definitely worth a spot in your B-movie home library. ♂

## Tim Ferrante's THAT'S SEXPLOITATION!

GARAGEHOUSE PICTURES

(\$24.99 Blu-ray) 10/16

**THE SATANIST** (1968) B&W/Bonus Feature:

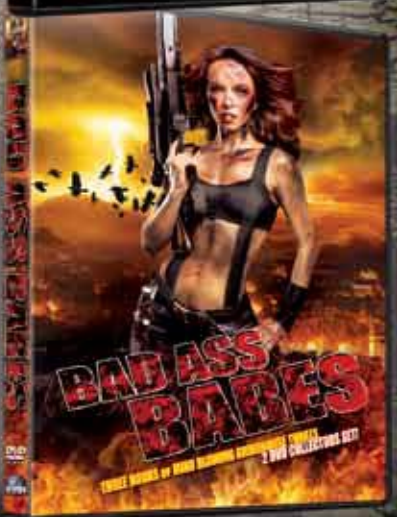
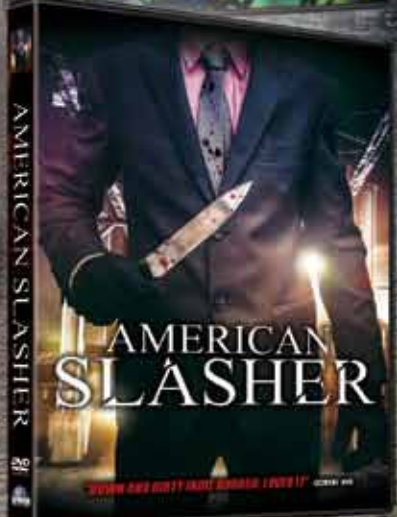
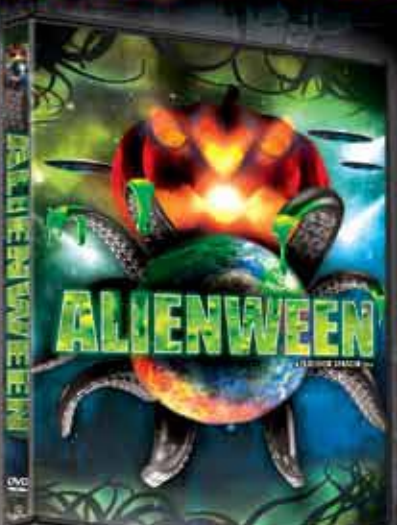
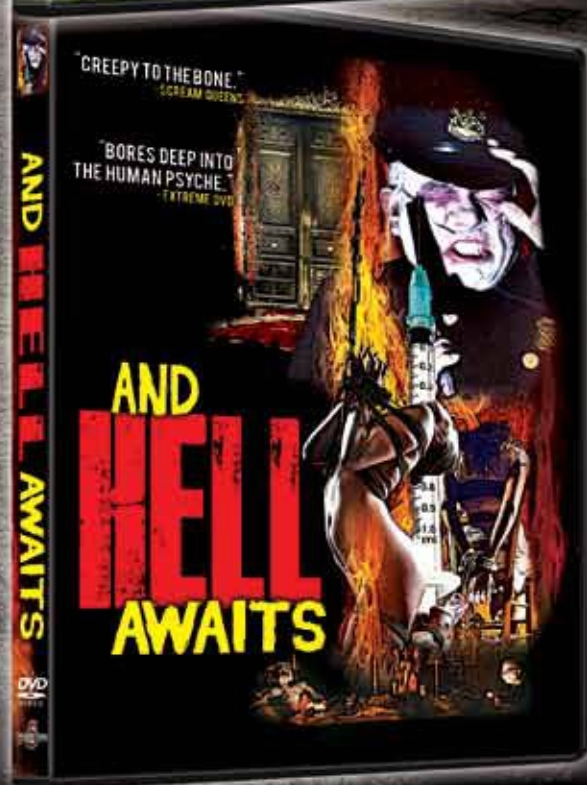
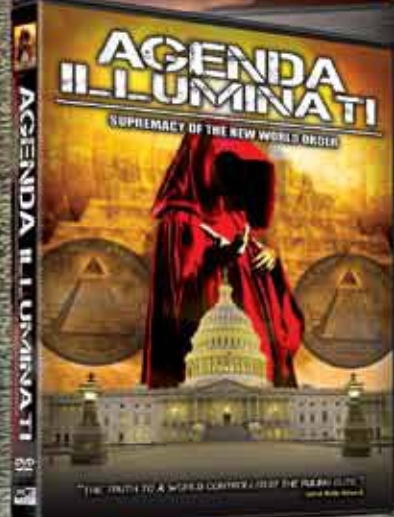
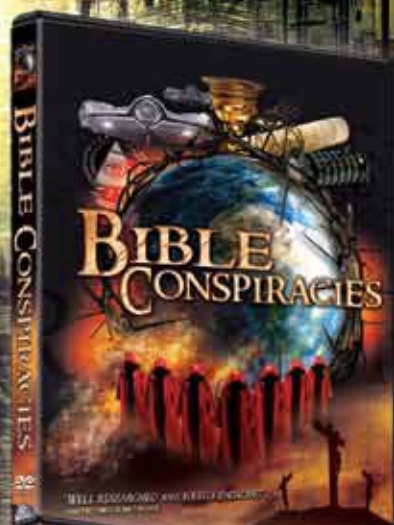
**SISTERS IN LEATHER** (1969) ♂♂♂

D: Zoltan G. Spencer (Spencer Crilly). Pat Barrington. 126 mins. (total)

Sourced from a rescued 35mm release print, this 4K restoration presents Spencer's naughty nudie **The Satanist** in all its black-and-white glory. The Garagehouse Pictures team has given this two-penny sexploitation entry—one of countless "lost" titles of American cinema—a world-class renovation. Its narrow plot notwithstanding, it's clearly evident the picture was shot with an experienced hand. Long before his turn as an arousal peddler, the director traveled extensively making industrial and documentary shorts under his birth moniker Spencer Crilly. He was broadly talented, known for his musicianship as well as his magician skills. **The Satanist**—and bonus feature **Sisters in Leather**—came late in the nudie cycle before being completely replaced by full-color hardcore productions. For some, the occult and satanism were fad things in the late '60s (Anton LaVey's controversial **The Satanic Bible** was published in 1969), so Spencer was certainly tapping into a trend of the day. The threadbare flashback story of recovering writer John and his wife Mary's involvement with the dark forces of neighbor Shandra is inconsequential. It's simply the enabler for showing writhing bodies, bare backsides, bulbous breasts and fleeting glimpses of pubic hair. In an era of Swedish softcore imports and cinematic experimentation, you'd think the director might be tempted to use swaying or zooming cameras or shoot inexplicable angles. Instead, **The Satanist** is traditionally filmed using standard techniques with smooth pans and requisite set-ups. Its soundtrack, however—mostly voice-over narration by the suffering writer backed by a weirdly wondrous score—is entirely post-synched. Liner notes author Chris Poggiali and classic adult porn website The Rialto Report's Ashley West contribute the accompanying commentary track. West provides extensive background information about Spencer and performer Pat Barrington (late of Ed Wood's **Orgy of the Dead**). She also appears briefly in the bonus Spencer feature, **Sisters in Leather**. Garagehouse obtained the original negative, and the 4K transfer looks sensational. The first two and half minutes are hampered by a missing soundtrack, but the label has restored it with replacement soundtrack music and dialogue subtitling. Flimsy plot of a blackmailed husband aside, **The Satanist** is a more ambitious production, replete with naked women riding motorcycles and a champagne-soaked lesbian party. The Blu-ray has been encoded ABC (all regions). Available through [diabolikdvd.com](http://diabolikdvd.com). ♂



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## DIGITAL DEBUTS

### CINELICIOUS PICS

(\$34.99 2-disc Blu-ray + DVD) 10/16

#### PRIVATE PROPERTY (1960)B&W

8881/2

D: Leslie Stevens. Corey Allen, Warren Oates, Kate Manx, Jerome Cowan, Robert Wark. 79 mins.

Two homoerotic hoods—alpha Duke (**Rebel Without a Cause** alum and future director Allen) and beta Boots (up-and-coming character actor Oates in his big-screen debut)—plan to seduce vulnerable Beverly Hills housewife Ann Carlyle (Manx) in a bid to relieve the recessive Boots of his virginity. After the pair commandeers the empty house next door, fast-talking Duke poses as a free-lance gardener in a bid to gain Ann's trust and entry into her home (writer/director Stevens' actual house). When the perps learn that Ann's singularly oblivious husband Roger (Wark) will be leaving on a business trip, they take that op to make their move. Viscerally directed by **The Outer Limits** creator Stevens and creatively lensed in black-and-white by top-tier cinematographers Ted McCord and Conrad Hall (the latter as camera operator), **Private Property** emerges as a daring cross between a sexually charged noir, a slightly overaged juvenile delinquent expose, and a home-invasion sleaze thriller in a **Lady in a Cage/Kitten with a Whip** vein. Stevens' real-life wife Manx (who would commit suicide shortly after their 1964 divorce at age 34) portrays Ann as a kind of shell-shocked Barbie Doll, quietly bored by her idle lifestyle and bemused by her outwardly affable but emotionally distant spouse. Allen interprets Duke as an insatiable sadist who enjoys toying with his prospective victim and dim sidekick alike. Much of the action unfolds in and around the Carlyles' pool, scenes further enhanced by eerie subaqueous photography. Lost for over 50 years, **Private Property** reps a major find, and the archivists at Cinelicious Pics have gone to admirable lengths to restore it to crisp condition. A bonus booklet supplies more of the film's backstory, while an on-camera interview with still photographer Alexander Singer (who received a **Private Property** "Film Technology" credit) further fills in the gaps. The movie has been on yours truly's must-see list ever since we spied its modest listing in the 1961 **Screen World** way back in the day. Stevens and Manx's only other collaboration, the 1962 pirate tale **Hero's Island**, toplining James Mason, surfaced on DVD in 2011 (MGM).

—*The Phantom*

### COHEN MEDIA

(\$49.95 2-disc Blu-ray) 9/16

#### DOUGLAS SIRK DOUBLE FEATURE

##### A SCANDAL IN PARIS (1946)B&W

8881/2

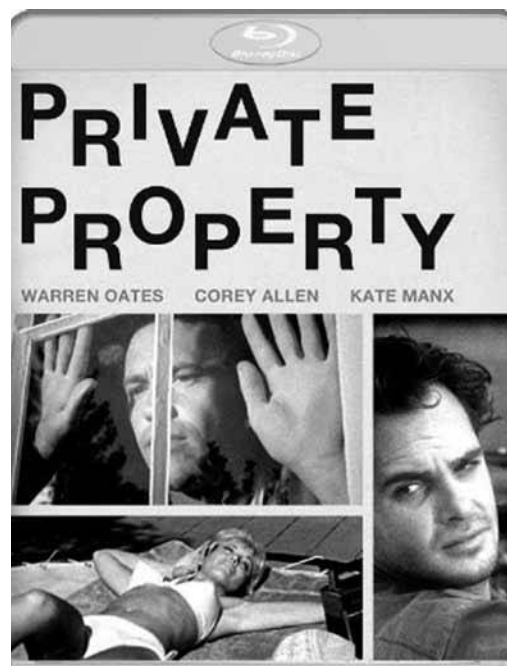
D: Douglas Sirk. George Sanders, Akim Tamiroff, Signe Hasso, Carole Landis, Gene Lockhart, Alma Kruger, Alan Napier, Jo Ann Marlowe, Vladimir Sokoloff. 104 mins.

The Talented Mr. Sanders is off on another adventure, this time as the 18<sup>th</sup> century French King of Underworld Cads, the wily Eugene Francois Vidocq, born in a prison and destined with sidekick Emile Vernet (Tamiroff) to hoodwink love-smitten maiden Therese De Pieremont (Hasso), Paris's beleaguered Prefect of Police Richet (Lockhart), the chief's gold-digging wife and Vidocq's mistress Loretta (Landis), a gullible police minister (Napier) and an admiring old lady marquise and the police minister's mother-in-law (Kruger). Happenstance rolling along with sly, suppressed humor holds this good-natured, highly entertaining frolic together. Vidocq and Vernet escape from prison using a file embedded in a birthday cake, are advised to join Napoleon's Army by Vernet's Uncle Hugo (Sokoloff), head of an extended clan of criminals, and, making their way back to Paris, pose for the painting of two church murals: Vidocq as the handsome St. George, Vernet as the ugly dragon. In Paris, Vidocq lifts Loretta's ruby garter. Vidocq and Vernet flee and, passing by the church with their likenesses, capture the marquise's escaped monkey (!), earning Vidocq, posturing on the spur of the moment as a noble, an invitation to the chateau, where he promptly steals the family's jewels. Complicating matters: Therese, in love with the painted St. George, falls for Vidocq. The only person with any common sense in Vidocq's orbit is Therese's kid sister, the child actor (Marlowe) with the startling grown-up voice and manner. It's a marvelous romp with Sanders at his entertaining best, low, amoral, cultured, and hypnotic, especially when, enlisting Uncle Hugo's family, he hatches a plot to rob the Bank of Paris. The script is based on the memoirs of the real-life Vidocq who, after 30 years as a criminal, actually became a Paris Prefect of Police. Unfortunately, a similar, unexpected yearning for redemption, influenced by his blossoming love for Therese, stops Vidocq in his tracks. It's almost a pity because the twists and turns in **Scandal** could go on endlessly, the film, tinged with irony and a sophisticated European-style satire, is so enjoyable, and Sanders, per usual, is at the top of his game.

##### LURED (1947)B&W8888

D: Douglas Sirk. George Sanders, Lucille Ball, Charles Coburn, Boris Karloff, George Zucco, Cedric Hardwicke, Lyle Maxwell, Joseph Calleia, Alan Napier. 102 mins.

Sanders returns as Robert Fleming, a rake about town and avaricious theater producer, always on



the lookout for a pretty actress to exploit, when he crosses paths with Sandra Carpenter (Ball in an accomplished dramatic role), a smart, cynical American actress transplanted to London for a show that closed, trying to make ends meet as a "taxi" dancer in sleazy clubs. A serial killer is on the loose, ensnaring victims through personal ads, known to the police as the "Poet Killer" for the poems he mails them after each murder. **Lured** is a remake of Robert Sidmak's 1939 French film **Pieges (Personal Column)**. Sirk, Sanders and Ball reinterpret it as a classic Sanders' vehicle—Sanders traipses all around town, upstairs and downstairs, into theater lobbies and clubs, keeping you guessing whether he's the clever murderer or not—while Ball, enlisted by the police as bait, provides a parallel plot with a mixed bag of humorous and frenetic momentum of its own. Zucco, better known for **The Flying Serpent**, **Dead Men Walk**, and **The Mad Ghoul**, provides both intended and unintended comic relief as Ball's goofy bodyguard, Officer Barrett, particularly during an off-the-wall encounter with unbalanced former set designer Charles van Druten (Karloff), who recruits women to his bizarre, theater-style apartment to act in imaginary plays before imaginary audiences. Though glib, polished and amusing, **Lured** dances nimbly with ambient contemporary sleaze, incorporating suggestions of inappropriate dalliances between employers and maids and even uncovering a criminal ring shipping unsuspecting women to South America. Meanwhile, women keep disappearing and Fleming, ever the more certain suspect, falls for Carpenter, who plans to marry him until she, too, has her doubts. Is Fleming good or bad? (And, of course, there's the matter of his business partner Julian Wilde [Hardwicke]. It doesn't matter. Ball and Sanders, seemingly an unlikely pair, fresh and still appealing, supported by Napier as Inspector Gordon, deserve a second look.

—Nancy Naglin

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## KINO CRIME CAPERS

(\$29.95 each Blu-ray) 10/16

### FUZZ (1972) 88 1/2

D: Richard A. Colla. Burt Reynolds, Jack Weston, Tom Skerritt, Raquel Welch, Yul Brynner. 92 mins.

Way back in the day, Ed McBain's (aka Evan Hunter) **87th Precinct** novels repped the first pulp fiction series to saddle yours truly with a serious literary Jones. We consumed McBain's well-worn paperbacks on the bus to and from school (they also hid snugly behind textbooks during those dead spots between 9 and 3). When the line landed its own TV show in 1961, NBC producers brought McBain's edgy policiers to surprisingly vivid cathode life, with gritty stories to rival the more highly acclaimed **Naked City**'s neo-realist crime tales. The casting proved equally inspired, with Robert Lansing starring as chief detective Steve Carella (and Gena Rowlands occasionally guesting as his deaf-mute wife Teddy), complemented by Norman Fell, Ron Harper, and **Plan 9** alum Gregory Walcott as fellow cops Meyer Meyer, Bert Kling, and Roger Havilland, respectively. Unfortunately, the show folded after a single season and some 30 episodes, leading us to sleuth out a few big-screen iterations of McBain's books, two of which had actually materialized prior to the television series. William Berke's 1958 B movie, **Cop Hater**, cast future **Scarface** costar Robert Loggia in the lead role (spelled "Carelli" here)—with Ellen Parker as Teddy, William Neff as Kling and Ted Gunther as Havilland, the latter pair relegated to relatively minor roles, and Meyer missing entirely—and quite ably captured the down and dirty ambience of McBain's novel, set in an unnamed city but clearly replaced by NYC in the film. (Berke followed up the same year with **The Mugger**, based on a non-**87th Precinct** McBain novel.) Film editor-turned-director Gene Milford took a less successful stab at the series with the 1960 indie **The Pusher**, a dreary affair further undone by Harold Robbins' (!) leaden screenplay and featuring Lansing in his first turn as Carella, sort of an audition reel for the TV show. Fast-forward to 1972, when United Artists decided the time was ripe to turn the material into a Burt Reynolds cop comedy, moving the action to Boston and injecting it with a more frantic pace. On its own, **Fuzz** works intermittently, with Weston making for an ideal Meyer Meyer and Raquel scoring well as an unusually high-glam policewoman assigned to the precinct, but the broader approach was bound to disappoint committed **87th Precinct** fans. The basic plot sees mysterious extortionist The Deaf Man (Brynner) threaten to assassinate prominent city officials unless his monetary demands are met, while, in **87th Precinct** tradition, several side cases simultaneously unfold. Though Hunter/McBain receives sole screenplay credit, the

tone feels decidedly off, with Burt and crew's exaggerated bumbling replacing the more nuanced frailties portrayed in the novels and TV series. Ironically, while **Fuzz** makes effective use of its Beantown locations, Tokyo provided the milieu for what remains by far the best **87th Precinct** adaptation, Akira Kurosawa's masterful 1963 manhunt **High and Low** (VS #68), based on McBain's **King's Ransom** and available in a pristine special edition from Criterion. For second place honors, a strong case can be made for another foreign affair, French suspense master Claude Chabrol's 1978 English-language screen translation of McBain's **Blood Relatives** (n.i.d.), with Donald Sutherland lending his own idiosyncratic interpretation of the Steve Carella character. While ultimately a failed project, **Fuzz** is a must for McBain completists. Kino's new Blu-ray offers backstories galore via an audio commentary by director Colla, moderated by filmmaker Elijah Drenner, plus a **Trailers from Hell** segment hosted by Josh Olsen (where we learn that Brian De Palma was the studio's initial directorial choice), and a Kino trailer gallery.

### THE LAUGHING POLICEMAN (1973)

88 8

D: Stuart Rosenberg. Walter Matthau, Bruce Dern, Lou Gossett, Albert Paulsen, Anthony Zerbe, Cathy Lee Crosby, Paul Koslo, Mario Gallo. 112 mins.

Mismatched cops Matthau and Dern's prickly camaraderie carries the day in this sometimes convoluted caper that begins with a machine gun slaughter on a San Francisco bus, then fans out all over the place. Dour, dogged Jake Martin reps the type of character that Matthau inhabited with consummate growly ease, while Dern's Leo Larsen emerges as something of a general human mismatch who delights in antagonizing everyone he encounters. Together, they take to the same hilly 'Frisco streets recently navigated by Clint Eastwood's **Dirty Harry** and Steve McQueen's **Bullitt** (**Policeman** was understandably influenced by both iconic films) for run-ins with a series of shady denizens, from informer Gallo to petty drug dealer Koslo to sinister businessman Paulsen. Drawn from a novel by Swedish crime scribes Per Wahloo and Maj Sjöwall (of **Man on the Roof** fame), **The Laughing Policeman** occasionally overwhelms with digressive detail and over-meanders into Jake's less than compelling domestic life, but when it sticks to the case, Rosenberg's film amply delivers the procedural goods. Extras on Kino's Blu-ray edition include an audio commentary by film historians Lee Pfeiffer, Eddy Friedfeld and Paul Scrabo, an interview with character actor Koslo, an animated image montage, and trailer gallery.



### TROUBLE MAN (1972) 88 8

D: Ivan Dixon. Robert Hooks, Paul Winfield, Ralph Waite, William Smithers, Paula Kelly, Julius Harris, Jeannie Bell, Gordon Jump. 99 mins.

Despite its black lead characters and milieu, **Trouble Man**—scripted by white writer John D.F. Black and helmed by black actor-turned-director Dixon—is more an integrated affair than a true blaxploitation flick (in fact, it bears many similarities to the following year's Burt Reynolds vehicle **Shamus**) and rates right up there with the top crime actioners of its day. Hooks is excellent as Mr. T, a no-nonsense P.I. hired by two uneasily allied gambling kingpins—African-American Winfield and Caucasian Waite—whose games are being routinely ripped off by a gang of hooded, heavily armed thieves. **Trouble Man** ultimately takes a **Point Blank** turn as Mr. T finds himself caught up in multiple treacheries while attempting to waltz around a hostile police captain (Smithers) and, in an amusing running riff, buddy up to a garrulous evidence room clerk (John Crawford) who'd rather yak than keep track of the inventory Mr. T is looking to appropriate. Hooks proves equally adept at using his kung-fu moves, ready fists, and lightning-fast pistols to battle his way through the ranks to the mastermind behind the operation. **Trouble Man** moves along at a steady clip, with further celluloid street cred supplied by **Superfly**'s Harris and **TNT Jackson**'s Bell, all propelled by a strong score by Motown legend Marvin Gaye. Blu-ray extras include audio commentary by film historians Nathaniel Thompson and Howard S. Berger, along with a trailer gallery for other Kino action releases.



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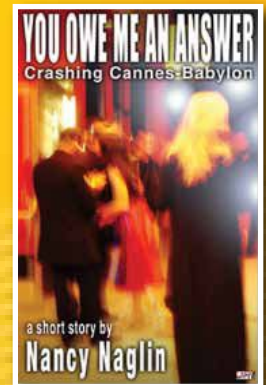


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## ABOUT NANCY NAGLIN:

Author, film critic and freelance writer Nancy Naglin has been the Art-House columnist for *The Phantom of the Movies' VideoScope* since 1993. Her work has appeared in numerous publications, including *The New York Daily News*, *New York Magazine*, *The Village Voice* and *Crawdaddy*.

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## The Phantom's '50s Phlashback!

### THE RETURN OF DRACULA (1958)

B&W ⚡⚡⚡

D: Paul Landres. Francis Lederer, Norma Eberhardt, John Wengraf, Ray Stricklyn, Gage Clarke, Virginia Vincent, Jimmy Baird. 78 mins. (Olive Films) 10/16

Veteran Czech thesp Lederer is the next best thing to Bela as an emigre vampire posing as a long-unseen relative of a Typical American Family (the Mayberry clan, no less, years before *The Andy Griffith Show* laid claim to that name) in this genuinely creepy and unsettling *Dracula* variation. Employing the alias Bellac Gordal, the Count wastes no time adapting to his new environs, finding a seemingly safe haven for his trusty coffin (a conveniently abandoned mineshaft, where he pauses to snack on a lost cat) and an unwilling acolyte in a blind woman (Vincent) he puts the bite on. Obviously, this remorseless bloodsucker rates pretty low on the empathy scale, especially once he sets his parasitic sights on lovely and innocent young Rachel Mayberry (Eberhardt). Initially unbeknownst to Bellac, vampire hunter John Merriman (Wengraf) is hot on his trail, enlisting the assistance of a skeptical local reverend (Clarke) to speed his supernatural enemy's destruction. Though sporting a modest body



count, *Return* compensates with several neat touches, from Lederer's genuinely sinister performance to a contrapuntal climactic Halloween party. Director Landres helmed the equally unnerving, pathos-laced scientific variation on the same theme, *The Vampire* (VS #62), the previous year, while Lederer would menace anew in the 1959 Filipino-lensed *Island of Dr. Moreau*-inspired chiller *Terror Is a Man*. Olive's wide-screen Blu-ray—which includes the film's infamous, almost subliminal color shock shot—does full justice to this undeservedly unsung entry in the '50s fright cycle, one of a number of black-and-white films, like *The Vampire* and Edward Dein's western take *Curse of the Undead*, left in the dust by Hammer's lavish, gory all-color *Horror of Dracula*. ⚡

## End Credits Contributing Writers

⚡David Annandale's latest novels are *Roboute Guilliman: Lord of Ultramar* and *Warden of the Blade*, available at [www.blacklibrary.com](http://www.blacklibrary.com).

⚡Dan Cziraky is boarding his backyard TARDIS.

⚡The dynamic dad-daughter duo of **Terry & Tiffany DuFoe** operate the award-winning Internet radio station **Cult Radio A-Go-Go!**

⚡**Ronald Charles Epstein's** book reviews are quoted on Amazon.ca.

⚡**Tim Ferrante** contributed to the commentary track for **Trailer Trauma 3: '80s Horrorthon** Blu-ray.

⚡**Robert Freese** was last seen at The Cosmic Drive-In.

⚡**Chris Hallock** is a freelance genre journalist.

⚡**Joe Kane** wonders: If Putin converted to Rastafarianism, would he be Ras Putin?.

⚡**Nancy Naglin's** latest book, *The End of 11th Street*, is available from Amazon.com.

⚡Follow film critic **David-Elijah Nahmod** on Facebook and Twitter: @DavidElijahN.

⚡**Joseph Perry** covers the Asian Film Festival beat for **VideoScope**.

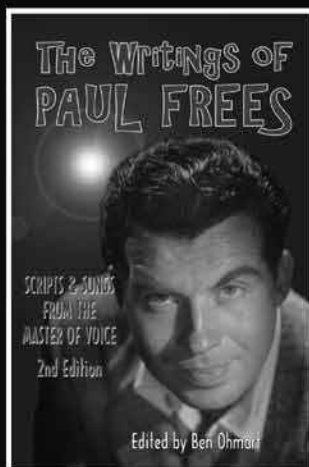
⚡**John Seal** is tilting at black windmills.

⚡**Don Vaughan** is the author of *Reel Tears: The Beverly Washburn Story* (BearManor).

⚡**Scott Voisin's** *Character Kings 2* is available from BearManor Media.

⚡**Chris Weatherspoon** is a film producer based in Asia.

⚡



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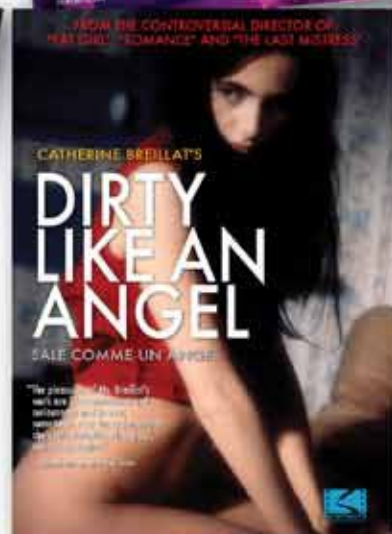
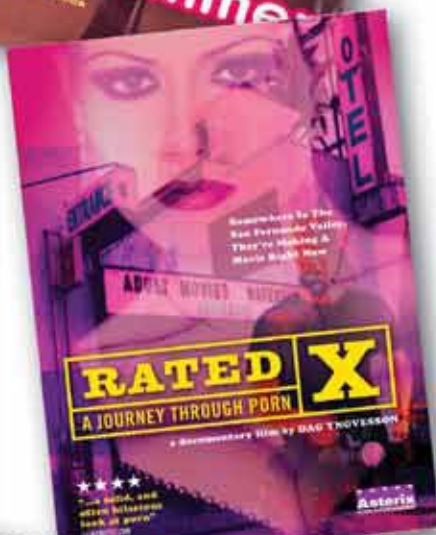


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## PHANTOM PHLASHES!

**ACTION UPDATE:** In the action arena, Paul Bartel's classic nihilistic futuristic 1975 action satire **Death Race** receives a reboot with the similarly Roger Corman-produced **Death Race 2050** (Universal Studios), featuring Malcolm McDowell. Universal likewise intros the superhero adventure **Max Steel**, starring Ben Winchell, Maria Bello, Andy Garcia and Josh Brener, and the western **In a Valley of Violence**, toplining Ethan Hawke, John Travolta, Taissa Farmiga and Larry Fessenden and representing appropriately named chiller director Ti West's first filmic frontier foray. Elsewhere on the western front, Denzel Washington assumes the erstwhile Yul Brynner lead mercenary role in Antoine Fuqua's remake of **The Magnificent Seven** (Sony Pictures), John Sturges' original remake of Akira Kurosawa's **Seven Samurai**; Ethan Hawke, Vincent D'Onofrio and Chris Pratt costar. Ben Affleck embarks on a rampage as the semi-autistic trigger-happy title character in **The Accountant** (Warner Home Video), while Jackie Chan presents a contempo remake of his 1990s vehicle **Amnesia**, starring Ken Lo and Rongguang Yu, and Mark Wahlberg, Kurt Russell, John Malkovich and Gina Rodriguez share starring honors in Peter Berg's fact-based disaster film **Deepwater Horizon**, the latter two titles via Lionsgate.

**KILLER THRILLERS:** In fresh thriller developments, Emily Blunt is **The Girl on the Train** in the best-seller adaptation from Universal Studios, while Rachel Weisz, Tom Wilkinson and Timothy Spall star in the UK courtroom thriller **Denial**, also from Universal. Keanu Reeves has *his* day in court as a determined defense attorney in **The Whole Truth**, featuring Renee Zellweger and Jim Belushi and released by Lionsgate. The same label launches the acclaimed space program conspiracy indie **Operation Avalanche** and the revenge thriller **Come and Find Me**, featuring Aaron Paul. Malcolm McDowell toplines in **Mississippi Murder**, while Morris Chestnut, Regina Hall and Jaz Sinclair form a treacherous triangle in **When the Bough Breaks**, both via Sony Pictures, and Cary Elwes surfaces in the Alaska-set thriller **Sugar Mountain** (Screen Media).

**HORROR HORIZON:** Lionsgate remains busy on the chiller scene: College kids go into the woods again in Adam Wingard's **Blair Witch** remake, Zoe Kazan and Scott Speedman star in the road-trip terror tale **The Monster**, and Rob Zombie returns with more mayhem with **31**, featuring Sherry Moon, Meg Foster, Judy Geeson and the ubiquitous Malcolm McDowell. **The Terminator** alum Michael Biehn plays a secret fiend in the hostage horror **The Girl**, the living dead march anew in **Zombie Massacre 2: Reich of the Dead** (both E One Entertainment),

while Universal Studios plays dangerous games with **Ouija: Original of Evil**, featuring Henry Thomas and Doug Jones, and Garagehouse Pictures keeps its coming attractions series alive with **Trailer Trauma 3**. ☿

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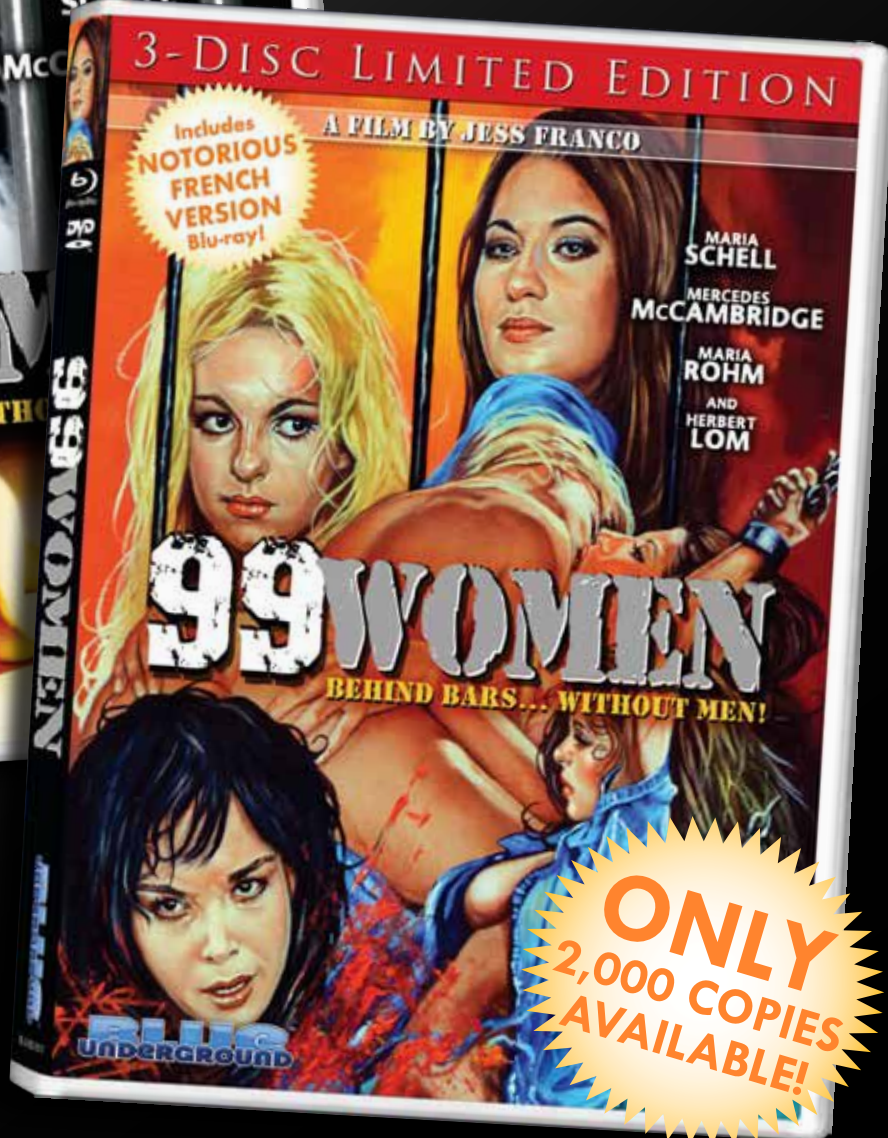
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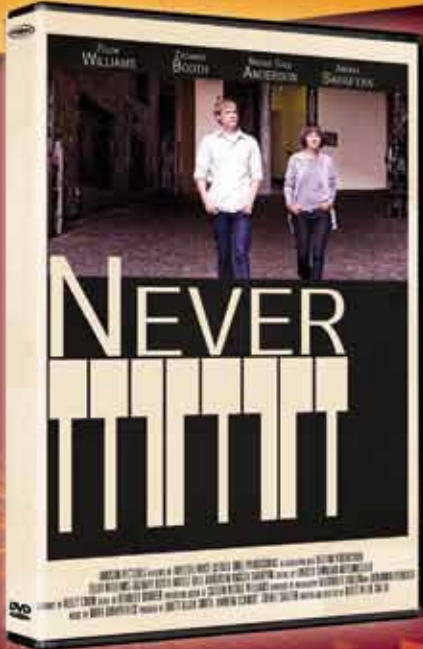
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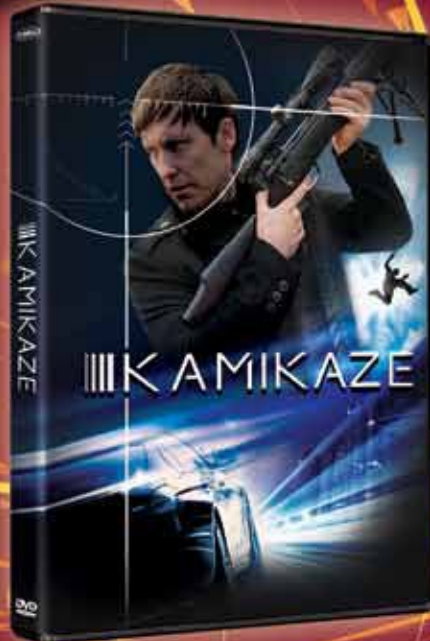
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